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The Uniqueness of Chinese Civilization in World History



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Preface

These lectures are based upon a one-quarter University of Chicago Course “Introduction to East Asian Civilizations—China.” Altogether I have taught the course for over 40 years.¹

The course has a rich and extensive history. It has been part of the University of Chicago curriculum since the 1950s. I had taken a similar course when a student here in the mid-1960s. In those days, the course was three quarters long. The first quarter (fall) was Shang through Han, the second quarter (Winter) was Tang through Yuan, and the third quarter (Spring) was Ming-Qing.²

After Professor Kracke’s retirement in 1973, the entire course was reorganized, with only one quarter for China and one quarter for Japan. That was the situation when I returned to Chicago as faculty in 1980. Upon arrival, I immediately began to teach the course.

The “Civilizations” sequences of courses are part of the unique University of Chicago “core courses.” Part of the Core Curriculum has always been courses introducing world civilizations. Civilization studies provide an in-depth examination of the development and accomplishments of one of the world’s great civilizations through direct encounters with significant and exemplary documents in translation. Their approach stresses the grounding of events and ideas in historical context and the interplay of events, institutions, ideas and cultural expressions in social change. Originally, there were such three quarter courses for major civilizations of the world, such as Western Civilization, South Asian Civilization, African Civilization, Russian Civilization and Latin American Civilization. Many other American universities, large and small, adopted these sequences. Other courses were added which did not fit the original conception of civilizational studies that were influenced by contemporary political concerns, such as “Colonization,” “Gender and Sexuality in World Civilizations” and “Human Rights in World Civilizations.”

¹ Ping-ti Ho (何炳棣 1917–2012) and Edward Shaughnessy (夏含夷) each taught it for two years in the 1980s. From 1992 to 2007, I alternated with Prasenjit Duara (杜贊奇) teaching the course.

² Each quarter was taught by a specialist of that era: the first taught by H.G. Creel (顧立雅 1905–1996), the second by Edward A. Kracke, Jr. (柯睿格 1927–1976), and the third by Ping-ti Ho.

What is significant is that from at least 1980, the East Asian Civilization sequence, the Western Civilization sequence aside, has always attracted the most students. When the undergraduate student body reached over 2000 in the 1990s, for instance, the course regularly attracted 150 students.

The influence of the course within the university has been considerable. Most Ph.D. students specializing in East Asia (in the disciplines history, anthropology, East Asian literature, sociology, etc.) have been teaching assistants in this course and have taught similar courses later in the institutions in which they teach. Many students contacted me years after they took the course to express their appreciation and gratitude. Some who were about to go to China for work actually returned to the university to ask my advice before their departure.

The content of the course has naturally changed over the years, partly because its function has changed.

When I began teaching the course in the 1980s, my goal was to introduce the fundamentals of Sinic civilization to American students and to get them interested in China. At the time, there were one or two students originally from Taiwan or Hong Kong who took the course. In the 1990s, students from the mainland of China gradually increased. In this century, students from China or foreign-born Chinese constitute perhaps 40% of the classes. In fact, a few years ago, I began to include Chinese terms in Chinese in the syllabus and to provide the original Chinese texts for the readings in translation.

I have learned that for American students taking the course has always been a powerful eye-opening experience. Chinese students have often been surprised or startled at my interpretations of Chinese civilizational history and partly because of this found the course extremely interesting and engrossing.

The content of these lectures is basic knowledge about Chinese civilization with which all Chinese high school students are familiar. The lectures were originally delivered to Western college students who had no knowledge of China.

There are three objectives to publishing these lectures here:

- To provide an English language learning tool. We present a Chinese language translation together with the audio recordings and English transcripts. Since the lectures are in relatively simple English and the subject is well known to all Chinese, the lectures are useful to Chinese students for hearing and learning English as it is actually spoken, particularly in an American college classroom.
- To give Chinese students an introduction to how foreign professors actually sound in a lecture as opposed to how they write in their academic publications.
- To highlight the historical interpretation differences between the conventional Chinese ones and those of Westerners. Curiosity about Western understanding of China could also spur students' study. I must emphasize, however, that my interpretations of the historical development of Chinese civilization are purely my interpretations. Although some of my interpretations are close to "conventional" interpretations found in Western writing on China, others are not. I would add that many scholars, especially specialists in a particular field, would criticize me for overgeneralizing. An example would be my interpretations of the Oracle

bones. Specialists whose research focuses specifically on Shang Dynasty history would probably criticize my interpretations as crude and unsupported by first-hand research.

As stated above, the objective was to record spoken language so that students would get a flavor of the way that American professors actually talk in class. Because this project was originally done as a video, certain things become somewhat unclear in the print-only transcript.

1. In the video, I was often pointing and gesturing in front of a wall map. Without the graphic, it becomes somewhat unclear when I say “this” or “here,” which was originally in reference to the map.
2. Sometimes “This” refers to a picture or a chart that also does not appear in the transcript text.

In the video lectures, it is most effective to speak extemporaneously, without notes. On the written page, however, the spoken language can veer off into the unidiomatic or even ungrammatical forms and appear rambling and jumbled in places. This is not uncharacteristic, however, of American professors when speaking without notes, so it does in effect meet one of the goals of this project.

I would like to thank the many staff members at Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press who did the painstaking work of transcribing these lectures. Most were students in the English Department of Beijing Foreign Studies University. Because their native language was not English, it was especially difficult for them to perform the tedious work of transcription. I have carefully proofed the transcripts for possible errors, but I am sure that both the transcribers and I have missed some.

March 2020

Guy S. Alitto
Chicago, USA

About This Book

The book is a meticulous work in answering these questions which often occur to foreigners as well as modern Chinese themselves at the thought of the old China and its experience in modern times: What is Chinese civilization? How could it exist for several millennia and spread that far? Is there anything inherent in this civilization?

From the standpoint of an “outsider” to this civilization, the author incorporates various elements, such as geographic factors, language, and thoughts, with the recurrent themes along the two thousand years and changes throughout, rather than simply following a lineal progression. His historiographical approach, the methodology of eclectic common sense, as he termed it, is a new try in this field and will present a brand new perspective for both readers and researchers in that field.

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Part I

Chapter 1

Chinese Civilization in World History



1.1 Definition

The subject of this course is the civilization of China, its development and special features. We should first make clear what we are doing and what we are studying. We are studying something called “Chinese civilization.” Usually, people take for granted what they mean by “Chinese civilization.” I think that we should make clear first of all that it is referring to an entire cultural world with, usually, the Chinese Empire at its center. The proper term for this would be “Sinic civilization,” rather than “Chinese civilization” because its cultural influence goes well beyond the borders of the Chinese empires. In fact, what we are talking about is a certain way of life that spreads to its geographic limits. That is to say, a way of life developed in the loess hills, west of the North China Plain, and eventually spread to those areas and influenced those areas beyond which it was impossible to go in pre-modern times. It is the most successful civilization in that respect, in that it spreads faster as well as more extensively than any other.

1.2 Usual Measures of Success for a Civilization

Let us use our imagination and imagine a space traveler, an Extra Terrestrial, an E.T., visiting the earth around 200 B.C. That would be at the time of the Roman Republic in Mediterranean civilization and of the Han Dynasty in Chinese civilization. Now the E.T. would whirl around the earth with his advanced technology, picking up all of the observable signs of human activity on the globe. He would very rapidly see what humans were doing across the globe and also very rapidly determine that it's East Asia where the “developed” world was, where human beings were doing cutting-edge work, advancing most rapidly. He would come to that conclusion by using certain objective criteria (i.e., those that can be seen from the outside). He is not

discussing the interior aspects of these various cultures that he is observing, but only the external objective quantifiable factors that he can see or sense from the outside.

1.2.1 Population

The first and clearest of these is, of course, population. Population is an excellent indicator of the success of any way of life. If a certain way of life doesn't work, the people leading it die out. If it does work, they proliferate. This is generally true across the board. Now, in the case of China, by 200 B.C., it was already the largest aggregate of human beings on the globe, and it would of course continue to be so up until the present. The E.T. would, going down his list of criteria, say, "Well, population, this is where it's up. It's the largest population of humans that I observe, so they must be doing something right there." At its height, the Roman Empire was still in area as well as, of course, population quite a bit smaller than the Han Empire. Alexander's Empire, although it existed very briefly, still included a smaller population than the Han Empire. The Persian Empire or any other previous empires or following empires simply could not compare in terms of population to the Han.

1.2.2 Continuity

A second criterion, perfectly objective and observable from the outside, is continuity. Well, we'd have to say that the E.T. returns every 200 years and looks around the world. He would very soon observe that there is a continuity in Chinese civilization that does not exist in any other civilization. There are certain fundamental principles upon which other aspects of the culture are still based. When Chinese civilization was disrupted by invasions, it, unlike other civilizations, always reconstituted itself, always reproduced itself. This is of course a unique feature of Chinese civilization, compared to the rest of the world.

1.2.3 Technology

A third objective criterion that he might be using would be technology, technologies of various sorts: productive technologies and technologies of everyday life (i.e., the "creature comfort" technologies). For irrigation in agriculture, it's still the Han that would be the superior. Another, perhaps the most important aspect of technology, is the rate at which iron technology spreads. Actually, this started a few hundred years before the Han. During the period of the Warring States, there was a rapid diffusion of the technologies for making iron implements. This was faster than it took place in the Mediterranean world, and it spread more rapidly through all areas of society.

One of the reasons might have been that the Mediterranean civilization was still a society with an economic base of chattel slavery. By 300 B.C., there were really no truly feudal aristocracies left in China because the warfare between the various states made them a hindrance to the success and survival of any particular state. It is during this period, of course, that the states were competing for a final supremacy and they started developing bureaucracies instead of feudal hierarchies of hereditary aristocrats. By the Han, land was alienable. It could be bought and sold. There was nothing really “feudal” about it. Once you have that, you have competition, and therefore, there would be a competition that would drive owners of land to seek the most advanced technologies, namely iron, for production. And therefore, I think that it would be one of the more important factors accounting for this rapid diffusion of iron technology.

1.2.4 Basic Economic Standards

A fourth criterion, again perfectly objective, would be basic economic standards, that is, levels of material consumption. Much of the rest of the world was still based upon slavery, and in China, there was no slavery. It was basically better to be an average person in the Han Empire on average than it was to be an average person, who might very well be a slave, in Mediterranean civilizations. So, in this case, you might say that standards of living in Han China were higher than those of Mediterranean civilizations.

1.2.5 Effectiveness of Governmental Mechanisms

Another perfectly objective criterion that might be used to measure the success of civilizations would be the effectiveness of government mechanisms, of the structures of government. And in this case, of course, the Han was well in advance of or superior to the Roman Empire (or of course the Roman Republic) in that the Han Empire was able to spread over a larger area and hold more people together in the same political unit because of the superiority, the greater efficiency of its political mechanisms. This was a true bureaucracy, unlike the Roman Empire, which was made up largely of alliances between local powers and Rome. Rome did not administer the entire empire directly through a system of bureaucrats. It was very often in alliance with the local power so that Rome might be acknowledged as the superior power but would not have direct control over a particular area. Now, in Han China, it was a very different situation.

1.2.6 Size of Cities

Another criterion that E.T. might use would be the size of cities. By the Han, it's very clear that the Han Empire had much larger cities in terms of population than any place in the Mediterranean world except possibly for Rome itself, which was pretty large, and certain other areas of the Mediterranean world, Alexandria perhaps. But overall there were larger Chinese cities that existed in the Han than in the Roman Republic or Empire.

1.2.7 Degrees of Commercialization

Another criterion that might be used is levels of commercialization. Again there was simply more trade. There were more people producing for markets earlier in China than in Mediterranean civilization. These points of superiority did not go away. They stayed in place until perhaps the seventeenth century when there were important changes that took place in Western Europe. Some scholars recently would put the date at which a divergence takes place, that is, when Europe essentially pulls ahead of China, at a much later date. Kenneth Pomeranz, for instance, in his very important work *The Great Divergence* puts the date of that divergence between China and Western Europe at year 1,800, that is, after the eighteenth century. But these points of superiority that I just mentioned were very clear through to the sixteenth/seventeenth centuries.

1.3 Direct Comparisons Between China and Europe

Now of course these are all gross generalizations that I make and there's often no firm evidence that can be used to compare the various civilizations of the world. However, in the case of China and Europe, we start having direct comparisons with the thirteenth century and Marco Polo.

1.3.1 Marco Polo

Marco Polo went to China and was simply overwhelmed by the wealth, sophistication of government mechanisms and sophistication of commercial mechanisms, which were far superior to what he had known back in Northern Italy—he was a Venetian himself. What is usually not considered about Marco Polo being “gaga” over China is that he was at that point someone from the most advanced part of Europe. That is, Northern Italy in the early Renaissance was clearly in advance of the rest of Europe

in all respects, not just commercially. Another factor that people seldom consider is that the China that he saw—Yuan Dynasty China—had just gone through decades of warfare, absolute warfare because the Mongol conquests, of course, took their toll. When Marco Polo got to the former Southern Song capital of Hangzhou, he was just amazed at its size, at its wealth and at its sophistication of daily life. As yet, that was an area that had seen great ravaging just a few decades prior to his arrival. So the fact that he comes from early Renaissance's Northern Italy and that he goes to a China that has just suffered decades of continuous warfare, are usually not considered. This makes his comparison—essentially he's making implicit comparisons between Northern Italy and China—even more extreme because he's comparing the most advanced part of Europe with a China that was actually, a few decades before his arrival, in even better shape.

1.3.2 Zheng He

When we get to the early fifteenth century, we have another opportunity for a direct comparison with Europe, that is, the voyages of Zheng He. The Ming Dynasty admiral brought to the eastern coast of Africa huge fleets of ships that were clearly hundred years in advance of any other naval technology in existence. However, this success of these huge fleets of 27,000 men, sometimes more, is not just an indication of superior naval technology. It is more an indication of the wealth of the society that was able to create them as well as the efficiency of the government that was able to mobilize such resources to put them together, make them happen. It's in a way truly incredible to think that no other area in the world could have even come close to such an achievement. What is even more remarkable is that these fleets were not, as other larger fleets hundreds of years later, on military expeditions. These fleets were almost completely self-sufficient cities: they had capacities for food production, they had many workers of one sort or another, and they were not just military and government personnel.

The usual comparison is with Columbus's voyages that took place of course much later, some 80 years later, in 1492. Columbus's voyages crossed a much smaller distance in the Atlantic. Columbus had three ships. The largest, the Santa Maria, was one fifth the size of one of Zheng He's ships. The comparison is truly dramatic. The only large fleet that indeed the Spanish Empire was able to put together, the famous Spanish Armada that attempted to invade England (which of course was much later, around 1,600, almost 200 years later), had a comparable number of men, perhaps 16,000, but they were all military. And moreover, that attempt to conquer England, which set out from Portugal, was broken up among other things by weather, whereas Zheng He's voyages were going from central China into the Persian Gulf and all the way to the east coast of Africa. So, in a way, Zheng He's voyages are not matched ever. That is, that size of fleets of primarily non-military personnel was simply never done again in human history, even in modern times.

So these two very specific comparisons can be made. And in both cases, it's China that ends up as being the largely superior civilization by these objective criteria. The situation, as I said, does begin to change in the seventeenth century with the beginnings of the scientific revolution in Europe and later of course the Industrial Revolution.

1.4 Change in Sino-European Situation

The key is in the eighteenth century. By the eighteenth century, Chinese technology was stagnating. There was very little innovation. It doesn't mean that of course the Chinese Empire itself was in great trouble, but there was far less innovation than there had been previously. During the eighteenth century in Europe, the time of Industrial Revolution, on one end of the Eurasian Continent, we have new technologies, productive technologies being developed at a very rapid rate, the formation of modern states and a new way of mobilizing resources and power. During the eighteenth century in China, however, we have a completely different phenomenon. We have technological stagnation and almost a doubling of population. So these two factors in China, that is, the stagnation of productive technologies together with this unprecedented explosion in population that brought this population almost double what it had ever been, more or less made China an economic inferior to Western Europe for the first time.

By the end of the eighteenth century, there were certain direct comparisons. The McCartney Mission of 1793, for instance, went to China, went up the Grand Canal and eventually to the summer capital of the Qing, to the Qianlong Emperor. That is, the mission started for the first time to regard China, which had up until that point been regarded as wealthier than Europe, as not as wealthy as Europe. And this perception of course intensified in the nineteenth century. I think that it's about in the 1840s that the image of China in European and American travel literature changed completely. By that time, Europe and, to a certain extent, North America had undergone a transformation, especially a transformation in the technologies of travel. By 1830, Europe had for the first time a road system. You would go from place to place on public conveniences such as stagecoaches. It just wasn't possible before. The professional travelers or travelers to China who wrote about China would of course have found by comparison the Chinese conditions of travel far far inferior.

So it is not just what was happening in China that upsets the balance; it's what was happening in Europe at the same time. And thus, by the middle of the nineteenth century, China was perceived of as poor and backward in most travel literature.

1.5 A Rise or a Return?

However, we all know that in the last 40 years, China has experienced an “unprecedented in human history” spurt of economic growth and it has weathered the recent world economic crisis better than any other major economy certainly. So what we are observing now? Are we observing something like a “return” rather than a “rise?” Because we’ve just been going over 2,000 or so years of history and for the bulk of it, it was East Asia with China as the middle of Sinic civilization, as its core, as the superior when measured objectively. It was the superior civilization. So we might be seeing something like a return to that position presently.

Another aspect to the so-called rise of China is not limited to China. The first explosion in East Asian economic development was of course the East Asia rim: Japan, Republic of Korea, Singapore...all of which were, of course, Confucian cultural areas. So in a way it’s not so surprising what has been happening in China for the last four decades.

Secondly, we have, at least since the nineteenth century, the experience of overseas Chinese being spectacularly successful. When Chinese start immigrating in larger numbers to Southeast Asia, for instance, they go as labors, very often as so-called coolies. Within a generation or two, however, they end up developing whatever areas they’re in economically and constituting at least the economic elite of that area. And this is still true of almost everywhere in Southeast Asia, except for places where the Chinese had been expelled, such as Vietnam and Cambodia. In other areas that would be including Burma and Thailand, the elites—sometimes they don’t want to show it—are of Chinese ancestry very often. Then, we have the rest of the world where Chinese have been extraordinarily successful, as we know, in business and in sciences and other aspects of the academy. Most recently, however, in the last decade or two there are now highly successful Chinese in arts, in athletics and in other areas of endeavor that you wouldn’t associate with overseas Chinese. So we might see the development of the last four decades as more a return to what had been for the bulk of human history, “normal.” That is, once again the center of gravity, the cutting edge, might be shifting back to East Asia.

1.6 Size Variations of Chinese Empires

The borders of the Chinese Empire vary considerably over time. Let’s start with the Zhou Empire, which is a relatively small area mainly along the Yellow River. The western end is around what is now Xi’an.

The Shang which preceded it was of course even smaller, more confined than the Zhou. So at the beginning of Chinese culture, the area that was influenced by it was still confined to this area of North and Central China.

The next long-lived dynasty, the Han, is represented by this pale red color here. In this case, note that compared to the modern-day maps, the areas such as Southeast

Asia, what is now Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos, were actually part of the Han Empire, as was Korea. But the southeast coast, which is now Fujian and Zhejiang, was not. This was still a non-Sinified area during most of the Han, as of course was Yizhou (present-day Taiwan). So the borders of the Han do indeed extend westward. The Xiongnu were driven out of what is now Mongolia westward. That's how they ended up in Europe.

For the next important dynasty, the Tang, borders are represented by this dotted line, the smaller dots. And you know it does not go to the extent that the Han does in certain areas but in certain areas it exceeds it. Here, what is now Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, Yunnan, Guizhou and part of Guangdong provinces indicates that the great Southwest area was not part of the empire. However, Xinjiang and the Taklamakan Desert was still part of the empire proper. By this time, of course, all of southeast coast had become Chinese and part of the empire.

The Ming Empire was relatively confined, at least as far as its northern border went. The Ming is represented by this larger dotted line that runs through Mongolia and southward. And the Great Wall of today is essentially the Ming Wall that was built along the defensive lines through present-day Hebei, north of Shanxi and Shaanxi. Actually, it runs where the remains of the Great Wall stand. Anyway the Ming, however, does include the southwest. The southwest is now Sinified and part of the empire, and so is Southeast Asia. Korea changed status during the Ming. It became a vassal state of the newly created Qing Dynasty or the Manchus, who originated up in the northeast above the Great Wall.

The Qing Empire, the last empire, is in area the largest of all, primarily because they are on both sides of the Wall. The Manchus very early allied themselves to various Mongolian political entities as well as Tibet, and to a certain extent used religion to cement the alliance as being a cultural as well as political one. So the Qing extends well beyond the present-day borders of China. The areas up in what is now Tajikistan, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan were included in the Qing but were ceded to Russia later. So China, at least compared to its largest extent, is not as large as it once was. I have forgotten to mention one of the major reasons that Mongolia, aside from the Inner Mongolia down here, is now a completely independent state, no longer a tribute state of the old sort.

Chapter 2

Geographic Factors



2.1 Geological Factors

Let us go back to the “beginning” when the earth crust was cooling, to certain physical processes that went on, that would affect Chinese civilization, that would shape it, that would determine the way that it would develop.

2.1.1 Collision of Indian Subcontinent and East Asian Continent

There are two specific events that I am thinking of. The first is the collision of East Asia (the East Asian Continent) with the Indian Subcontinent. That is, the two continents drifted together, had collided literally and so pushed up this, the highest mountains in the world—the Himalayan Mountains. This would be extremely important in the development of Chinese civilization because it would isolate China from the rest of the Eurasian Continent. It also has two other effects, aside from isolation, and they are: first, the high areas will be in the west, and that means that the rivers were flowing eastward across the continent; that in turn means that North–South traffic, communication, transport, would be more difficult than East–West because of the way that the rivers would flow.

This collision of the Indian Subcontinent with the East Asian Continent produced these important effects which would be extremely important in the development of Chinese civilization. The process whereby the Himalayas were pushed up is perhaps the most significant because it would more or less assure that the civilization developing on the eastern side of the Himalayas will be primarily an indigenous one that is developing on its own with minimal influences from the outside. This will certainly be different from the rest of the Eurasian Continent.

2.1.2 Monsoon Effect

The second effect that took place is the way that the world ended up spinning and the cooling of the crust led to the “monsoon effect” for East Asia—for all of this area, and South Asia as well. It means the moisture will come from the South and go north. As it goes north of course, it drops its moisture in the form of rain, so that means that as further north you go, the drier it will get. Extremely important.

Why? Well, there’s a very famous structure in China, the Great Wall, right? Everyone knows about that. It’s the largest man-made object in the world. It runs roughly westward across China and Mongolia. It is not just a military or political marker as is often thought; it is actually an ecological marker. It means that the border between those areas where sedentary agriculture is possible and where it is not (only a herding culture is possible). So it’s not as though the development of the northern nomadic cultures was by accident. It is just their geographical position. And it is this defensive line that would be the significant one in the development of Chinese civilization. The north, the nomadic civilization of the north, will be the significant OTHER, that is, the way that Han Chinese will define themselves: we are not THAT, the significant OTHER. That is the way that we define ourselves and our way of life.

2.2 Han People and the Northern Peoples

Generally, the movement of Chinese civilization, of Chinese culture, was in this direction—southward and westward. Even in the Han, what is now Fujian Province was still not completely Sinified, but in general, over that period of time (during the Han), it becomes so because the direction is this way.

2.2.1 The Nomads

This is a more or less permanent limitation on the growth and spread of Chinese civilization, and it is on the ecological foundation which in turn of course depends upon the phenomenon that I just mentioned—the monsoon effect. What you have north of the Wall is miles and miles and miles of not very much. The way of life is based upon chasing water and grass; that is to say, a herding culture goes where the water and grass are so that the herds can, of course, exist. These peoples of the northern steppe in this entire area in the early periods don’t have names except the ones that Chinese give them. They don’t enter into the written record of history except through China.

And because of their nature, because of that way of life, because nomads are born on horseback, because up until the sixteenth or seventeenth century (with the development of firearms), the ultimate offensive weapon in the world was the mounted

bowman, the nomads of the north would have the military edge over the sedentary agriculturalists south of the Wall. Their problem usually was not a military one. The problem was a political one; that is, they were usually unable to unite against any common enemy, to make various tribes ride in the same direction against another common foe. Usually, there were internal struggles involved—lineage with lineage, tribe with tribe—that limited them. Even though the military will and the military superiority were there, the political will and the political organization were not there. When great leaders managed to put them together and form groups, they ended up being very successful militarily in all directions.

By the first millennium B.C., certainly by the second half of the first millennium B.C., there were clear differences in other aspects of culture, for instance, the way clothing was worn. This is a continuous process of self-defining: “we are not them,” and the northern peoples defined themselves too as not being the Han Chinese. It was a continuous process.

2.2.2 *Cultural Exchanges*

This did not mean, however, that cultural borrowing didn’t happen constantly. Various fundamental technologies, most Chinese don’t even know, came from the northern peoples. A concrete example would be the horse stirrup. Stirrups are very important because if you have stirrups, you can “post” and thus fire arrows when you are riding. Most musical instruments, aside from the traditional Chinese bells, drums, jade chimes and maybe certain flutes, like the stringed instruments, are all from the North or the Northwest. Certain foodstuffs, *hujiao*, for instance, have a *hu* character in front of it, meaning “northern barbarian.” Pepper is a “northern barbarian” product. Another example that most people don’t know about would be the chair. That is to say, during the Han, the Chinese, like the Japanese—well, the Japanese imitated them—sat on tatamis, sat on the floor essentially. It wasn’t until later that chairs developed, and their original name used during the Jin Dynasty was *huchuang*, that is, “barbarian bed.” So there was continual exchange of cultural products, despite this obvious antipathy to each other’s ways of life.

As I said, the spread of Chinese culture usually goes to the South and Southwest. There are certain areas, especially in Southwest, that are not Sinified until later, until the fourteenth/fifteenth centuries. But they do not constitute a significant challenge; they do not constitute a way of defining oneself. They are merely “barbarians” of one sort or another; they do not present a significant OTHER from which one can distinguish oneself. The general size of the empire, of course, what it included and what it didn’t, varied enormously over time.

2.2.3 *Cultural Divisions*

I would also point out that even though we now talk about “ethnic” divisions, they do not exactly apply to pre-modern Chinese civilization. Certainly, despite some recent scholarship to the contrary, I do not think that “race” in its modern sense was an available concept in pre-modern China. The Northern peoples are, for the most part, not all that distinguishable from Han Chinese. There’s nothing remarkably different about the physical appearance. The major division was always cultural. The major distinction between a “civilized” person and a “barbarian” was the degree to which the person was acculturated, was *tonghua*.

I didn’t mean to dismiss the Southwest entirely. There were significant challenges. The Nanzhao Kingdom was, during the Tang, a very powerful force. The Tibetan peoples essentially constituted a considerably powerful force too, a non-Han force. But, for the most part, they were not noticed in the same way that’s symbolized as the ideal “barbarian.” The “barbarians” that appear in Chinese drama are always of Northern variety. They are costumed as Northern rather than Southeastern “barbarians.”

2.3 Rhythmic Explosions from the Nomadic Peoples

Now going back to what is essentially Central Asia: miles and miles, except for occasional grass, is just frozen tundra. And to the west is grassland; of course there is the Gobi Desert. This of course also contributes to the general isolation of East Asian civilization in its development. So what happens though? It’s really very interesting. When a political organization in Inner Asia does occur, when there is a large enough political organization formed, the peoples of Inner Asia explode outward.

2.3.1 *Xiongnu*

The first time this happened was during the Han with what the Chinese called the Xiongnu. They were Northern people, people of the steppe, nomads who continuously threatened the borders, south of the Wall. Eventually, Han Wudi, one of the Han emperors, was able to break them up and essentially drive them westward. Now we all know what happens 300 years or so later is that from Mongolia they are essentially driven to the West. They appear in Western Europe, exactly the same people described in exactly the same way as the Chinese describe the Xiongnu. That is, Attila and all of those people—the ones that almost sacked Rome—were clearly peoples of Inner Asia. That is, they looked and acted just like the Xiongnu of the other end of the Eurasian Continent.

2.3.2 *Turkic Peoples*

The second minor explosion took place in the fourth/fifth/sixth centuries when what was then called Turkic peoples (various types of Turkic peoples) exploded. This is of course the linguistic term. That is, at that time, it is possible to distinguish the language of these peoples as a part of the larger Turkic linguistic family. They exploded primarily southward and founded their own kingdoms in North China. That was a minor explosion, as I said, because in other directions they had no effect, they did not go westward.

2.3.3 *Mongols*

The next time, however, the peoples of steppe organized themselves into a large political unit, a completely different operation. That is because Genghis Khan, you could say, invented an ethnic category or an ethnic entity. He said: anyone who lives in a felt tent is one of us. And through this notion and, of course, inventing a written language—Mongol, another way of forming essentially an ethnic group, he did that. He was able to form such a powerful military force so that he or his descendents starting here in Inner Asia went here to Eastern Europe. And everything in between was part of the Mongol Empire. Of course it didn't go to Japan. It didn't get to Japan because the *Kamikaze*—the “divine winds”—broke up the Mongol fleet before it got there. Nevertheless, this is another example that it's always rhythmic. That is, every few centuries, you have the people of Inner Asia exploding outward, and very often in the western direction.

2.3.4 *Ottomans*

The last such explosion, as we know, is the Ottoman Turks. The Ottoman Turks threatened Western Europe. Up until the Battle of Lepanto of 1571, the Turks continually threatened Western Europe. That sea battle more or less turned back the Turks so that from then on they were in retreat from Europe. However, even to this day, you know that there is a “belt”—a culinary, musical belt—that exists between Inner Asia and Western China, through across Inner Asia, Turkey and up to the Balkans. First time I heard Uyghur music, I thought it was Greek music. It used the same instruments and had some of the same rhythms. You go to Xinjiang and you find a lot of stuff wrapped in grape leaves, as indeed they do in Greece, in the Balkans. There are obvious similarities in the cuisine as well as in music or other such arts that the explosion of Turks left traces of.

2.4 Major Geographic Feature: Isolation

Look at a map of China, as I said, and you can see that this is an isolated area. There's the steppe, miles of nothing, so that until the domestication of the camel, it wasn't crossable at all. There are the highest mountains in the world of course, and then, there is the Pacific. The Pacific is the largest ocean, and for most of human history, it was where maps ended and was where they drew dragons and other fabulous beasts. And so up until the early modern times, East Asia was essentially quite isolated.

2.4.1 *Limited Cultural Influences from the Outside*

The first important influence, as we know, was from Northeastern India—what is now Nepal, and that is Buddhism. It came across these oasis towns here in the Taklimakan Desert and eventually arrived in inner China maybe in the third century A.D. and spread very rapidly. That is a considerable cultural influence from the outside, the first really significant one from the outside. There are not too many others. And of course, Buddhism, once it gets to China, is Sinified. It changes in nature considerably.

And then, after that, of course, the next major culture influence from the outside was from the West. Some scholars would argue that there had to be more outside cultural influence. Let's say, the casting of bronze took place much earlier in the ancient Middle East than it did in China. But I think the odds are that the idea might have been transmitted across the steppe, the idea of casting bronze, but not the actual techniques because the bronze castings of the Shang were quite different in technique, superior but also different from those of the ancient Middle East. So that might have been one of those possible influences from the outside and there were many developments in the ancient Middle East that took place before they did in China. But aside from that possible influence, I can't think of any other that would be significant.

2.4.2 *Consequences of Isolation*

This isolation has two important consequences. It means that two features that are usually associated with the ancient higher civilizations become permanent. That is to say, they do not disappear; they are maintained for 3,000 years.

2.4.2.1 Universal Kingship

The first of these is the universal kingship. That is to say, I am not just the king of this place; I am the king of all human beings essentially. Now ancient Middle East kingdoms—Babylon, Egypt—all had this notion but they didn't last that long.

In the case of China, although the Shang king was just probably the head of confederation of various tribes, he was, it appears, the chief priest. And when he sacrificed to his ancestors or when he sacrificed to the spirits of the mountains and the streams or whatever, he was doing it not just on behalf of himself but the rest of humanity as well. Partially of course it was his ancestors that were the source of his power and legitimacy; but it was also that he was not just the chief political authority, he was also the chief spiritual authority. In other ancient civilizations, as in the ancient Middle East, there was usually separate priesthood that connected to some other world, some other godheads of one sort or another, that were separate from the political lines of authority. In China, both political and spiritual authorities were invested in one person—the king. So that makes the Chinese kingship quite different from that of the ancient Middle East.

And it, too, would be a feature of Chinese civilization. The scribes who helped the king do divination, the people who did the physical work of incising the oracle bones (the divinatory bones that the royal family used) were not spiritually superior. They were just scribes; they were still inferior to the political authority. They did not have any way to relate directly to the spirits of the mountains and streams or any other spiritual entity. Everything went through the king. And this was true of the Zhou as well. And so unlike other ancient civilizations, you have in China a Caesar/Pope figure. That is, the Pope, the spiritual or the doctrinal authority, is the same as the political authority.

This feature, because of this general isolation, is maintained for thousands of years in Chinese civilization. I should explain that although in the ancient Middle East the political rulers might be Gods (i.e., the Egyptian pharaoh was a biological descendent of gods), the Shang king or the Zhou king was never that. He was never a god, but he was the chief priest. He was a godly man, a holy man, but he wasn't himself a god. These notions in the time of the Roman Empire were quite different when rulers became promoted to godhood after their deaths (this happened with Julius Caesar and Augustus and several others after them).

2.4.2.2 Ethnocentrism

A second consequence that follows with this isolation is again a universal feature, not just of ancient Middle East civilizations, but of all cultures. And that is ethnocentrism: people who act like us, who participate in our culture, are the real human beings, and those who do not, don't quite make it to true humanness.

It's the notion of ethnocentrism that, as I said, is universal. It makes no difference whether it's in a higher ancient civilization. The European word usually is of one form or another of "barbar." In English it is "barbarian." "Barbar" is derived from a

Greek word that was supposed to be an imitation of non-Greek speech. It's supposed to sound like "bar-bar-bar-bar." And that itself was an indication of what a barbarian was: someone who doesn't speak like us, someone who doesn't act like us, someone who doesn't participate in our civilization. Many Neolithic technological level tribes have the same notion that their people, people who are members of that group, are human beings, as opposed to the rest of bipeds.

This is not different at all from the Chinese notion, but it is certainly expressed in a different way. I started out talking about the question of what actually is China. And I answered that China in this sense is "Sinic civilization." It's the center of a cultural world; it's not necessarily limited to a political unit.

But that cultural world is never really defined. In *The Analects*, the Confucius refers to what we might call Chinese culture as simply *siwen*, that is, "this culture." It is referring of course to the old Zhou culture. But this is the only indication of what Chinese culture is. It's "this thing," "this thing of ours." Later it's sometimes referred to as *huaxia*, this cultural entity *huaxia* not a political entity at all. And this remains the final criterion for barbarian/non-barbarian ness. That is, if you participate in *siwen*, in this culture of ours, then you've made it into true humanness. At later times, if you observe the "five relationships," then you are one of us.

2.5 North-South Chief Differences

Another general effect of monsoon (i.e., of the moist air going from south to north) is the clear division between Northern and Southern China. What is usually considered ancient Chinese culture/civilization is associated with North China. Although there were regional cultures that did exist, they were not really brought into the same world until the creation of the first centralized bureaucratic empire by Emperor Qinshihuangdi, until 221 B.C. Now this Northern Chinese cultural tradition spread, as I said, in various directions. The center of culture, the center of population and the center of economic activity, up until perhaps the sixth/seventh centuries, were in the North. At that time, however, as I just mentioned, with a minor explosion of the northern people southward, there was a migration southward of refugees, you might say. After that it is Central and South China that is the center of gravity for economic production, for population and for culture.

Why is that? Well, of course, various factors are involved, but the most important one is simply that the South is wet, and the North is dry. So what does that mean? Well, what can you do with water aside from drinking and washing? Well, you can have paddy agriculture; you can grow rice. That is the most productive way of producing calories per unit of earth there is. In other words, you can produce in the same space more calories and thus feed more people with paddy agriculture than you can with dry agriculture, the dry grains of the North: millet and barley and wheat and so on. So that's one of the basic reasons the South was able to produce a greater economic surplus—it had paddy agriculture.

What else can you do with water aside from having paddy agriculture? Well, you can float on it. That might sound strange but up until relatively recently, most transportation was water transportation, almost always, because unlike transportation overland, it's far more efficient. The friction of distance is vastly reduced. So in the North, where there is little water, there is less transportation essentially. In the South where there's more water, you have more transportation. What does more transportation mean? It means commerce, and commerce means economic development. So since the seventh/eighth centuries, it is the South that contains the bulk of Chinese production of various sorts.

However, you will note that the capitals of China were almost in the North. So why is that? Well, you want to have your command center near the action, near the military threat. And of course as we said, the military threat was always up north of the Great Wall. Therefore, you have to be close to the action. Your command center must be in the North and that's where almost all Chinese capitals were located. The capital of important major dynasties is always in the North.

Other differences between North and South, of course, don't have much to do with production. They are just determined by climatic factors. I remember the first time when I came to China, I went from South to North on the railroad. It was really interesting. Every time we got off the train onto the platform, people started to get taller. The further north we went, there was more garlic you could smell in the air. There is a very pronounced difference between the Northern and the Southern style. Country people tend to dress differently too. And this has to do again with moisture issue more than anything else. The major draft animals in the North, especially for transportation, would be mules, donkeys and horses. In the South, not necessarily of course, most of transportation would be water transportation traditionally, but the water buffalo is far more important in the South than it is in the North. Large conical hats are obviously of greater use in a wetter climatic area than they are in the North.

There are other smaller aspects of culture that do indeed show up. The taller/shorter business of course is a cliché of sorts. Nobody really knows why that would be. But it certainly seems to have been so traditionally. It is true that there is more protein in dry grains than there is in rice. That might possibly be a factor. Another factor that foreign historians of China always mentioned would be the infusion of "Turkic blood." That is to say, the North being closer to the significant OTHER to the people of the North, they would have into their gene pool the larger infusion of that Northern gene pool. But I don't know. I suppose these days we could actually find it out by DNA investigation. But in any case, an old saw was that infusion of Turkic blood made the peoples of North more vigorous. I never quite got that. I mean, why would Turkish blood be any more vigorous than non-Turkish blood?

Chapter 3

Chinese Language



3.1 Chinese as a Written Language

I am going to speak about the Chinese language and especially its unique aspects. The nature of the written Chinese language is exceedingly unique. That is to say, of all the written languages of the world, only it has the properties that allowed it to form a kind of core of Chinese civilization.

3.1.1 *Chinese Language and Chinese Civilization*

I have mentioned previously that Chinese civilization was unique in that it was able to continually reproduce itself over time, that there is great consistency, great continuity through time so that, for instance, in the early twentieth century, school children would be reading and modeling their own prose style after the texts that were over 2,500 years old. Now that of course is unique to China, and it is only because of the nature of the written language that such continuities are possible. Secondly, the success of Chinese culture's spread, that is, the spread of its influence to the geographical limits, is also partially due to the nature of the written language.

3.1.2 *Nature of the Written Language*

What about the nature of this written language? Well, let us look at this character here (五). Everyone knows of course what this character is and they know what it means. It means this, five, in English. However, if I'm Italian and I call it *cinque*, it still means this. If I am French and I call it *cinq*, it still means this. If I am Japanese and I call it "五" (*go*), it still means this. Actually if I am a southern Min speaker, I would also call it *go*, but it still means this.

That is to say, there is a direct communication without any intervening sound from the ideograph to the reader. There is no process that necessitates any phonetic component to this operation of understanding. So because of this, the written Chinese was in a way the ideal language for its spread over space. As it turns out, of course, many non-speakers of Chinese would learn the written Chinese language. For instance, the Japanese and the Koreans, to name two, did not have to learn Chinese to write Chinese poetry or Chinese essays. They learned the language from literary Chinese texts, the classics, such as the *Lunyu* (*The Analects*) or *The Mencius*. That's the way they learned the language. In the same way, when they are learning it, they can ascribe whatever phonetic values they wish to those texts. It makes no difference what they are calling each individual character, in the same way that speakers of Chinese but of different dialects might have learned the classics, reading them in a dialect. It makes no difference because the meaning is conveyed directly without any necessity of ascribing phonetic values to these characters.

I would like to point out that the nature of Korean and Japanese languages has no resemblance at all to the Chinese language. They are completely different language families. Korean, Japanese, Mongolian, Turkic and others are Altaic languages. Their stem words are all unrelated completely to Chinese. However, there were Japanese scholars who could write Chinese poetry and Chinese essays, as there were Korean scholars. Both of these languages developed a syllabary or an alphabet (as is the case of Korean later), so that they represented their spoken languages phonetically.

But originally as I said, it was literary Chinese that held the Sinic cultural universe together. It was an ideal instrument for this purpose precisely because it did not involve phonetic values (it did not involve what came out of people's mouths when they spoke). It was a written code.

Chinese itself is part of what is sometimes called Tibeto-Burman or Sinitic Tibeto-Burman. It depends upon the linguist, the way that these linguistic families are organized. But essentially it is related to many languages in East Asia, some of which you wouldn't think of, such as Miao, Yao and of course Burmese and Thai. These are all part of a language family. Oh, and Tibetan of course. These are part of one language family. Mongolian, as I said, Turkic languages, Japanese, Korean and Tungusic languages such as Manchu are in a completely different language family. They are, as I said, interestingly enough, more closely related to Hungarian and Finnish than they are to Chinese.

3.2 Chinese Language Not Just Han

I should point out that what I am referring to as "Chinese" is, strictly speaking, known as the Han language. That is to say, in politically correct terms, there are many Chinese languages aside from what foreigners usually call "Chinese." 6% of the population of China today roughly are native speakers of languages other than Han, other than what we would call "Chinese." They are of course things like Mongolian, Miao,

Tibetan, Zhuang, Yi and other ethnic minority languages. But they, too, are Chinese languages, strictly speaking.

The Han language is of course extremely important. There are probably 1.3 billion people who are able to speak it. Most ethnic minorities in China are able to speak the Han language to some degree as well. It has in the last five to ten years become globally important. With the rise of China, there is a concurrent rise of the Chinese language. I'm from Chicago. Our mayor Richard Daley has seen to it that Chicago public schools—some of them—now teach Chinese language in primary schools and secondary schools. In fact, he made a statement once to this effect: in the future, there are only going to be two languages in the world, one, English and the other, Chinese. Now that sounds far-fetched but well, possible in the long run because of all the non-English languages in the world, Chinese can't go away. It would never go away because of the nature of the script and the number of speakers of the language.

To a certain extent, you can see the gradual disappearance of other languages, smaller languages. Just recently, for instance, universities in the Netherlands have abolished their departments of Dutch literature. That is to say, you cannot take a course apparently in Dutch literature at universities in the Netherlands. So one can see that, despite the reaction against world homogenization—of course this negative reaction is everywhere in the world too—possibly in the long run these two languages, English, which is for all intents and purposes now the international language, and Chinese, might be those that remain, the last languages standing, as it were.

3.3 Principles of Characters' Construction

We shall now discuss the nature of this script, of this unique written language.

We first encounter it in the oracle bones of the Shang Dynasty. There are bronze inscriptions as well. But for the most part, it is in the oracle bones that we find the most writing. There has been speculation about the beginnings of Chinese script. There's always been speculation about how it got to the stage that we find it in the oracle bones because once you look at the language in the oracle bones, you'll find it's already highly developed. It has the fundamental features of what essentially modern Chinese will have already. And so far, archeologically we haven't been able to find with certainty any intervening steps on the way to that level of development.

In the oracle bones, we find probably 20% of the ideographs as pictorial—that is, they are drawings of physical objects, attempts to represent them. Here, for instance, I have several examples, that is, the modern character *ma* (马) for horse. It is very much like a horse. It's a drawing of a horse. Or the character *ri* (日) for sun or day. It is a circle with a dot in the middle, obviously a pictorial representing of the sun.

However, as I said, only 20% of the characters are of that sort. A fundamental principle of the Chinese script had already been established by the time of the oracle bones, and that is, a systematic combination of a phonetic element that represents the sound of the character and a meaningful element. So most Chinese characters are

constructed in that way, and 80% of those appearing in the oracle bones are indeed constructed in that way.

3.4 Great Reverence to Script

An important feature of Chinese culture, and again quite a unique one, is the position of written script in the culture as a whole. It is the object of enormous reverence. The written language is regarded as powerful and mysterious, almost quasi-religious in its nature.

3.4.1 *Non-Development of Oratory*

A concrete example would be the non-development of oratory in ancient China. In the Western world where oratory as a political tool or as an art was highly developed, we have Demósthene in ancient Greece or Cicero in Roman times, great orators who in fact then become litterateurs through the spoken word. In ancient China, we have nothing of that sort. We have reverence for the written word and suspicion of the spoken word.

So in *The Analects*, we have statements by Confucius that essentially are critiques of clever speakers: “*qiaoyanlingse, xian yi Ren*” That is, glib talkers and smooth-looking operators are very seldom in possession of the supreme virtue, of *Ren*. There are other examples of the same thing. For instance, someone is talking about one of his student Ran, and he says that Ran has supreme virtue, has *Ren*, but alas, “*buning*,” he is not eloquent. And Confucius responds very angrily in a way; his tone is almost outraged. He says, “*yan yong ning?*” Why must you talk about eloquence as something positive? What is the good of being an eloquent speaker? It is very clearly another negative remark about the spoken word versus the written word. I give another example of Confucius’ attitude toward clever speech, toward the spoken word. It’s relatively straightforward. It is “*qiaoyan luande*.” That is to say, clever speech, eloquence and sweet words lead to moral degradation. It’s that simple. There is a direct relationship between the two in his mind. Now compared to Mediterranean civilizations, this is diametrically the opposite.

The written word had such reverence paid to it throughout the 2,500 years since the classical period. That is amazing in a way. In the Qing, for instance, there were local societies, the members of which simply went around looking for waste paper with characters written on them. They would collect them and then reverently burn them together rather than having them degraded by lying around the place as it were, by being litter. Nowhere else in the world do you find such a deep and abiding reverence for the written word.

Throughout those 2,000 some years of imperial history, we also find an assumption that the written word is bound to morality and that reading is in itself a way to improve

yourself morally. And there are many phrases to that effect, i.e., *dushu dongli*, so that it is the literate person who is a kind of moral authority because he or she possesses the knowledge of the sacred written word.

This is of course quite the opposite of what certain people, especially post-structuralists, have to say. They might have been just addressing Western culture. For instance, Jacques Derrida makes a great case that it is the written word that is the degraded form. Western culture values the spoken word over the written word. Well, obviously, his knowledge of world cultures was somewhat limited. Otherwise, he would never have tried to advance such a claim. Because we have, in the case of China, precisely the opposite situation, and it is a permanent one that starts at the very beginning, at least as far as we know from the record, and continues up until, I suppose, to a certain extent today, although of course recently less so. So you have in China the written word as a kind of enshrined entity.

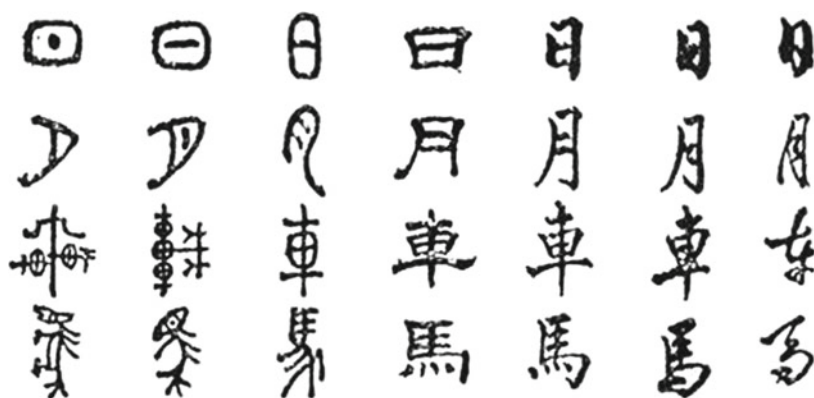
3.4.2 Calligraphy

Another example of how this is expressed is calligraphy. There are other cultures which highly value calligraphy, such as Arabic culture. There's a good deal of attention paid to the art of writing script. However, it is nowhere near the position that calligraphy occupies in Chinese culture. Calligraphy is of course nothing more than an individual's written script. It is the highest of arts. We have, for instance, in Chinese history people who are known for their calligraphy before we have known painters. For instance, Wang Xizhi, the most famous perhaps of Chinese calligraphers, his art was regarded as a personal expression of himself. The idea that a painter would have the same capacity, or that even a painter's name would be attached to any work, comes a bit later after Wang Xizhi. So it is calligraphy that has the preeminence over painting, which of course uses the same tools.

In the case of painting and calligraphy, the tools are sometimes almost fetishized. That is to say, the "Four Treasures" as they are called (the ink stone, ink brush, ink stand and so on) are regarded as semi-holy objects and are very often great works of art so that you going to any museum which has Chinese holdings, then you'd find a good deal of carved ink stones or the little rocks that you would use as the resting place for your writing brush, or writing brushes. There are no equivalents of course in Western civilization to the attention that's paid toward writing implements.

So again to sum up, you have in the case of Chinese civilization a unique reverence for the written word versus the spoken word, one that goes well beyond any other culture in the world. Now some people might say, "Isn't there the same reverence paid to the sacred books?"—that is, in the West (the Bible) or in the Islamic world (the Koran). Well, that's not quite the same thing. In the case of Chinese written words, all written words are valued, not just the Chinese classics or the ancient classics, such as the *Zuo zhuan* or the *Shujing* or whatever. All written words inherently are deserving of respect, not just what in the monotheistic world would be regarded as sacred texts.

The first Chinese characters were incised on hard surfaces, such as bone or bronze. The materials themselves more or less determined the shape of the characters. After the development of paper and the writing brush, everything changed. You start using ink and brush, no matter on what surface, actually even before paper. There was writing on bamboo slips with a brush. There was writing on silk, and then paper of course became the most important common surface. So as you can see from these characters, there is an evolution of form that reflects the change of writing implements more than anything else. And once you have a writing brush as the chief instrument, then you have creative ways in calligraphy of rendering these characters. That's what makes it so artful. You see the original form that might have appeared in the oracle bones, then a relatively cursive rendering called *xingshu*, "running style," and then finally what is known as "grass style," *caoshu*. Once you have a writing brush, then you have the freedom to have the variations on the theme, and be creative about these variations.



3.5 Chinese as a Spoken Language

We've been speaking primarily of the written language so far, so how does this written language relate to the spoken language? This is indeed a complex problem. We don't know. The first indications that we have of how characters were read come from certain dictionaries. So we do know that there has been an evolution of pronunciation of various sorts over time.

The nature of the spoken language of course shares certain features with the written language. Let us talk about these features, especially in comparison with, let's say, Indo-European languages.

3.5.1 A Monosyllabic, Uninflected Language

The first and perhaps most important of these features is that linguistically one could consider Chinese as monosyllabic—one character, one syllable. Unlike practically all other languages of the world, Chinese has no tenses and has no inflected forms (for instance, no endings) because each word is in itself a stem word. One character, one syllable, one stem word. It's as simple as that.

3.5.2 A Highly Evolved Language

Now this means that Chinese is simpler than most languages because it has no derivative affixes or inflections. Does that mean because it's simpler it is somehow more primitive than highly inflected languages? Now actually it is precisely opposite. That's the case: all languages tend to drop off through time those features that are not necessary to convey meaning. The most highly inflected languages are very often those of what might be considered less developed societies (i.e., technologically Neolithic level societies) and other newer languages, such as Russian. These are very highly inflected languages and they are newer. Chinese being very old has more time to drop off the unnecessary parts of the language and still conveys meaning. In English, we have inflected forms that within written memory anyway we've already dropped. In Elizabethan English, for instance, we have forms like *thou* and *thy*, which we no longer use. These are inflected forms. We have other examples of the same thing that have simply disappeared. Some remain, such as the difference between *I* and *me*, *me* as an object and *I* as a subject.

However, in the Chinese case, we don't know, but probably, if not inflected, there were more complex words that existed with consonant endings. Most of the syllables do not have consonant endings. We know, for instance, that in Tang Dynasty (ninth century or so), the word for Buddha, which is in modern Mandarin pronounced “fó,” was pronounced something like “biek,” which is a very different longer syllable with a final consonant at the end. So the assumption would be that over time the consonants that weren't necessary were dropped off as long as meaning was being conveyed. They weren't needed and were eventually discarded. We have something like the same thing in English, whereby “are yo goin” will convey meaning. Without final “g” sounding in “going,” you still understand what the sentence means; instead of “you,” “yo” would also be understood. So to a certain extent, you can see something like the same process going on.

3.5.3 Syllable Poverty

However, the problem is that the evolution is such a long period that the modern forms of the spoken language suffer from what one might call “syllable poverty.” Let’s talk about modern Mandarin, for instance. Altogether there are 420 syllables—one character, one syllable. Obviously, you can’t have a language with 420 words. At the very minimum, for any kind of language you need at the very least 4,000 or 5,000 words. In the case of spoken Mandarin, of course we don’t have that many altogether.

3.5.3.1 Homophones

Tones will increase the number of meaningful syllables by, in the case of modern Mandarin, four. There are four tones. So instead of 420, you have 4 times 420. However, the characters are not evenly distributed through these 420 syllables. (There are two characters pronounced “qūn”; there are 70 characters pronounced “shi.”) There are not so many characters per available syllable. Some syllables in certain tones do not constitute words. So in the end, in spoken Chinese languages, you do not have that many syllables and consequently you have many homophones (i.e., words that sound exactly the same). That would be similar to, in the case of English, a language made up of things like “I can not **bear** to see a **bear** walking **bare**.” That is, the same syllable with three completely different meanings could appear in the same sentence.

There’s a famous—I guess you call it a story, written by China’s most distinguished linguist Zhao Yuanren just using the syllable “shi” (in pinyin, S-H-I), and it goes on forever—“*Shishi shi shi shi*.” It’s about ten stone lions (*shi shi shi*), and what they do. And it’s a little story describing various actions: what happens to the stone lions, what they do and where they go, using the one syllable “shi” of course in the four tones of modern Mandarin. There are other examples of this. When I was learning Chinese, the first one that I had heard was “Mother was riding a horse, the horse went very slowly, so mother cursed out the horse,” which is “*¡°Mama qima, ma zoudeman, mama ma ma*.” My goodness, how can that possibly be understood? It’s because of, as I said, the limited number of syllables available in modern Mandarin.

In southern dialects, you have very often many more tones. In southern Min or in Cantonese, you have six or seven tones commonly appearing, whereas in Mandarin there are only four. But in general, the problem is exactly the same—the problem of homophones.

3.5.3.2 Devices to Distinguish Homophones

How does the spoken language get around this problem? The written language of course doesn’t have this problem because it conveys meaning directly through sight.

The ideograph doesn't need to be inflected and doesn't need to have an ending to convey a meaning. It is just directly there. It doesn't have to distinguish itself from the other 69 characters that are pronounced "shi," for instance, but the spoken language of course does. Otherwise, as I said, every few words would sound exactly the same. So how did the spoken language develop to get around this problem of what might be considered syllable poverty?

It developed various devices. We might mention, first of all, something that might be termed the "synonym compound"—that is to say, two characters that have at least in certain respects possibly the same general meaning put together, forming a two-character compound. Upon hearing that, the person listening would immediately understand, if they are literate, what two characters are being referred to. For instance, the word for meaning itself, *yisi*. If I just said *yi* (i.e., the syllable "yi" in the fourth tone), the person listening to me would have no idea what I was talking about, which of the dozens and dozens of *yi* pronounced in the fourth tone I was referring to. If I add the synonym *si* immediately after it, then it becomes clear because only those two characters share a meaning. When you hear those sounds forming a compound, you know exactly what is being referred to. This is a very common device. Another example of this would be *kanjian*, that is, to see. "kan" in the fourth tone means to see; "jian" in the fourth tone also means to see. If I just use one alone, it might be clear enough by context but usually it isn't.

Another elucidative device you would find performing this function would be the verb-object compound. Let's say the characters for "qi," the syllable "qi" in the second tone. There are at least tens of these "qi" characters that are available. So when I want to use this one in particular, how does my listener know that I am referring to it? I add a certain object. So once you hear the object of the verb, to "qi" (to ride, or straddle in this case), you hear "ma," you say, "Oh, I know what 'qi' is being referred to." Of course because it forms a compound with *ma*, it makes both of these two words clear. And so the listener would understand immediately what the two characters are.

Another such device would be to add essentially a non-meaningful element at the end of the syllable. Very often in standard Mandarin such an element would be *zi*. So if I say "haizi," everyone knows that I am talking about children because I added the *zi*, "haizi"; or "xiezi," everyone knows that I am talking about the character for shoes because there is a *zi* at the end. Of course you have to be very careful. There is a story about a missionary who had to study Chinese very assiduously before he arrived, and he knew that the spoken language had certain features. And he knew that for certain syllables you added a *zi*, and it made things clearer, but he wasn't too clear about what particular syllables *zi* could be added to. He decided for his first sermon he would preach on the values of thrift. And he used as an example his own practice of thrift—his old watch. That is to say, "Yeah, as my watch is beat up, old but it still functions; I am not going to get a new watch. I am going to keep with my old watch." Now the word for watch or clock is "biao." He thought that he would add perhaps the *zi* at the end. And of course that changed the meaning entirely so that his sermon became a joke. Because "biaozi"—I don't know if you want to

say this—has a completely different meaning and one that would render the entire sermon somewhat comical.

Another such device would be the measure word. We have them in Western languages too. An example would be the “three heads of cattle.” “Head” is a measure word for “cattle.” In spoken Chinese, there are more of these measure words that perform the same elucidative function. For instance, if I refer to a *shan*, if I say *yizhuoshan*, you know that I am talking about a mountain. If I say *yijianshan*, you know that I am talking about a shirt. So the great differences in the meanings depend upon the measure word that would be used.

So that’s the ways basically that the spoken language gets around this inherent problem of being basically an old language that has dropped off unnecessary elements.

3.6 Chinese Language Romanization

The next problem that I will address is surprisingly important. It is the problem of Romanization. That is, how do you represent Chinese script to those people who do not know it? That is, how do you write Chinese with characters other than Chinese characters? How do you represent the Chinese language, its names, its terms, its proper names and so on?

3.6.1 *Romanization in the Earliest Period*

This is an early problem of course. The first real Sino-European dictionary was created by the great Jesuit missionary Matteo Ricci. Matteo Ricci was of course Italian, along with Michele Ruggieri, was the earliest Jesuits to actually serve at court and be in the capital. So among his many other accomplishments, he did put together a Sino-(in that case) Portuguese dictionary. He represented the sounds of the characters. And of course he was in Beijing so he’d be using the Mandarin sounds. He rendered them with Latin (i.e., the Latin language) and Italian. The meanings were in Portuguese, which was a lingua franca of the time in the East Asia because the Portuguese had arrived from Europe there before any other Europeans and became a lingua franca of the maritime world.

Now after that, the process of Romanization, which is essentially what Matteo Ricci did, became very disorganized. There was no unified Romanization system. And to a certain extent, it wasn’t required. Instead, a kind of hodgepodge of features of both European languages and Chinese languages usually served as the spoken means of communication between Europeans, of whom there were very few of course, and Chinese. Sometimes this is called pidgin. There are other forms of pidgin elsewhere in the world, but in this case we are talking about this particular kind.

From that language, we have in English many terms about China that of course have nothing to do with the original Chinese. For instance, the city of Guangzhou was known generally in the West as Canton. Now how do you get it from “guangzhou” or even in the Cantonese dialect something more like “guaanzhou”? It’s because the Portuguese simply created that word as an approximation of what they thought they were hearing when that city was being referred to. Another example would be the word that we’ve used very often—Mandarin. That’s actually derived from the Portuguese verb “mandar” which means “to dispatch,” “to order” and “to command.” And so those who do the ordering or commanding are the Mandarins. That’s of course a word that’s in all Western languages in one form or another.

3.6.2 Three Most Prominent Systems of Romanizing

When you get to the latter part of the nineteenth century, however, and when there is much more traffic, diplomatic, commercial and religious (with the arrival of Christian missionaries in larger numbers), another system was required. And so by the end of the nineteenth century, there were more or less two different systems in place representing Chinese words: one was creation of two people, Mr. Wade and Mr. Giles; and the other was the system that was used by the postal system (i.e., the Chinese postal system needed to have its place names rendered in some form). So if you look over here (the following table), for instance, you will see the original Chinese word for, in this case, Qingdao, the city of Qingdao: the first line is how it would be rendered, strictly speaking, in Wade-Giles, the second line is how it was rendered in postal spelling, and the third line is pinyin, which is the Romanization system in use today. Now you’ll notice that the postal spelling is considerably different from what, strictly speaking, the Wade-Giles spelling would be.

	青岛	北京
Wade-Giles spelling 威妥玛拼音	Ch'ing-Tao	Pei-Ching
Postal Spelling 邮政拼音	Tsingtao	Peking
Pinyin 普通话拼音	Qingdao	Beijing

Now the interesting thing is that very often these postal spellings become more prominent than, strictly speaking, the correct Romanizations in the Wade-Giles, and in fact, many continue to this day. For instance, if you go to a store any place in the world, you will find Qingdao beer. The spelling of Qingdao beer that’s used on the label is the postal spelling. Another example would be Beijing. You see here the two characters, *bei* and *jing* meaning northern capital. Below that, you see the Wade-Giles spelling, which is Pei-Ching. Below that you see the postal spelling,

which is Peking that of course some people would pronounce /pi:ki/ and that was the most prevalent pronunciation of the word Beijing throughout the world for a very long time. It persisted to this day.

I remember in 1980 Beijing University sent its first delegation abroad. I guess it went elsewhere before it went to the United States and visited certain prominent universities. At that time I was at Harvard teaching and I accompanied the delegation as their interpreter. The delegation was made up of course of the president and then various deans, the head of presidency office and so on. They carried with them the various insignia of Beijing University including the Romanization that was pinyin—"Beijing." So they visited the United States, they visited elsewhere and then returned. They visited in May. I happened to go to Beijing the following August and so the administrators of Beijing University all came out to entertain me. I found that in the intervening months they had changed the insignia on the stationery of Beijing University from the pinyin spelling back to the postal spelling because they discovered that abroad Peking (i.e., the postal spelling) was still well known. And so the prestige (the renown) of the original Beijing University still adhered to that spelling, whereas Beijing did not simply convey the same thing to most foreigners. So they reverted. And it has to do with a basic problem. The world has to learn Chinese before it can be solved and I don't think that will happen overnight, so we are stuck with this.

3.6.3 *Wade-Giles System*

A thing about the Wade-Giles system was that the initial consonance did not have the phonetic values that you would expect. For instance, the syllable that would begin with a "B" sound, such as Beijing, was rendered with a P. If you wanted to have the actual P sound, you'd have to add after the P a little apostrophe. It was called an "aspirate mark." Because you'll notice that when you want to say the sound, when you want to emit the sound P and B, basically your tongue and your lips are exactly in the same position. The difference is that when you say P', you emit a breath—you "aspirate"; when you say B, there's no breath that comes out—you don't aspirate. So this little apostrophe was known as an aspirate mark. "Ch" without the aspirate mark, for instance, would be pronounced more like "j."

3.7 Dialects

We are now going to discuss dialects, Chinese dialects, which are often spoken of by foreigners as a great problem. Actually, it's a universal phenomenon. There are dialects for every language all over the world. And the actual spoken languages prior to the rise of mass media that were used differed in spectrum. You could walk in certain distance between towns and most people in each town would speak differently.

In fact, you could say that throughout the world every family, to some extent, had its own language. After the rise of the mass media and mass transportation, it wasn't, strictly speaking, as limited as it once was. But certainly traditionally that must have been the case.

In the case of Chinese, it's a bit more complicated because as I said, the spoken language and the written language were to a certain extent two different languages. The ancient written language, which is *wenyanwen*, literary or classical Chinese, was related to the spoken languages, but it certainly wasn't identical with it. It was more a written code because of the homophone problem. I could read a text in classical Chinese out loud and the person listening to me would not understand because again too many homophones and no elucidative devices of the sort that I was just speaking of.

3.7.1 *Most Distinct Dialects*

The dialects of the southeast are the more complex. That is because transportation was more difficult because of the mountain regions. The same phenomenon occurs again throughout the world. I'll use another example of southern Italy, Calabria. Not far from our village further up the mountain were villages that were speaking Greek colloquially, Greek, not Italian or any Italian dialect, at least up until the early twentieth century. That was because they were less accessible. There were less communication and less reason to go any place else. So they maintained the Greek language probably from the days of the Byzantine Empire to the twentieth century. And they are recently reviving the Greek language there. Another example would be in the United States. Up until the early twentieth century, there were areas of the Appalachian Mountains (i.e., the mountains that ran north-south on the eastern side of the United States) that were still speaking Elizabethan era English (i.e. at is, the language of Shakespeare) again for the same reasons.

So in the case of Southeastern China, you have what are essentially distinct languages. They are called dialects, but as spoken languages, they are mutually incomprehensible. Even in the single province of Fujian, the northern area around Fuzhou speaks a language that is totally incomprehensible to the people of the southern area of Fujian, who speak *minnan* (southern Min) dialects. There are no cognates. There's nothing similar about them. And the same is true of other areas in the southeast.

3.7.2 *Identical Syntactical Structures*

However, the fundamental structure of all the spoken languages is almost identical. That is, no matter what those characters are called, this fundamental syntax is basically the same. They are just pronounced differently. And this as I said is true of all

languages at least originally, before the rise of worldwide mass media. An example would be the simple phrase. One of the ways that you ask a question is to state a verb (a stative verb), the negative and the stative verb again. So “Is that OK?” or “Is that good?” in modern Mandarin would be “*hao bu hao?*” In, say, Cantonese (that’s the dialect of Canton, of Guangzhou and that general area), it would be more like “*hou ‘m hou?*” But it makes no difference because you hear that the structure is exactly the same. It makes no difference that the pronunciations are so different. After being there for a few months, you could almost begin to understand because the underlying structure is the same.

It is true of course that in certain areas dialect groups invent their own characters, not many though. For instance, in Hong Kong newspapers, you find a character totally invented, which is the character here (冇). It’s pronounced *mo*, which means the negative of *you*, to have or to exist. Very seldom, however, do these things occur. The fundamental structures of all dialects are essentially the same. Another example, let’s say the question “Where are you from?” In modern Mandarin you could ask “*ni shi shen me difang ren?*” In southern Min you’d say “*ni xi duo yi ei lang?*” Almost the same, you can hear the structure. The thing about dialects of course is that because there aren’t written languages; very often people don’t know what characters their speech refers to. I’ve had several experiences of that sort.

3.7.3 *Horizontal and Vertical Differences*

Now the question is: what about the rest of China, the so-called Mandarin-speaking areas of China? It is in a way complete misnomer to call them Mandarin-speaking because each area has its own dialect. For instance, I have some personal familiarity with certain area in Shandong Province to the east of the capital. The first time I visited there, I was hearing the syllable “le,” such as “lebo,” which I thought meant *liubai*. Actually it didn’t. It meant *erbai*. So in that area, all of the “er” sounds become “le” so that if I said “ta you le ge le,” it means he has two sons (*ta you liangge erzi*). Now that is incomprehensible even to a native speaker of standard Mandarin.

And then, the primary difference is not so much over space but vertically. That is, villagers very often don’t have to go any place else, they don’t have to make themselves understood to others; they don’t have to go to meetings, so they don’t have to change their local speech. At higher levels (in bigger urban enclaves), of course the speech becomes more standard because they are areas of greater mobility. Many people from outside areas would be there. And everybody has to make themselves understood to others. If, say, I am a native speaker of the standard Mandarin, I was born and raised in Beijing, and if I go again to the countryside, even in the province that surrounds Beijing, there would be expressions that I will not understand. Because I was born and raised in a big city, I go down to the countryside and I am going to miss some of that speech.

So on the one hand, the underlying structure of Chinese spoken language, no matter what the dialect is, is essentially identical; on the other hand, the variations of the sound are also quite considerable, so much so that even in Mandarin-speaking areas you have mutually incomprehensible speech.

Chapter 4

Rise of Classical Thought



4.1 “Axial Age”

We are going to talk about what is usually called the classical period of Chinese thought, during which the fundamental patterns of Chinese thought are established. That’s a period between roughly 600 and 200 B.C. It is the time of the “Hundred Schools,” “A Hundred Schools” meaning of course many schools. It is the time of China’s transcendental revolution, that is, Kongfuzi (Confucius), Mengzi and his other followers are responsible for a spiritual revolution that establishes one spiritual basis for humanity. Daoism of course is another part of this transcendental revolution in China.

This does not happen in isolation. That is to say, it doesn’t happen alone in China. This general time (roughly from 800 to 200 B.C.) is usually regarded as a part of a world spiritual revolution, and the transcendental consciousness arises.

More or less simultaneously, of the great civilizations of the world, we have certain thinkers who revolutionize the traditions in which they are. And one of these examples would be of course classical Greece and Plato. Plato of course then has his influence carried forward through Christianity. At this time, the rise of Plato and the other classical Greek philosophers represents a part of this worldwide transcendental revolution. Karl Jaspers in the 1950s gave this phenomenon a name. He called it the “Axial Age,” that is, several great civilizations experiencing a kind of spiritual revolution and laying down certain patterns that would be the basis of later religious thoughts.

At the same time roughly, we have the rise of the Hebrew prophets in Judaism—Jeremiah, Elijah, etc.—who represent exactly the same phenomenon only within the Jewish tradition. This, of course, is a part of what is later carried forward in Christianity. They also have at roughly the same time the rise of Buddhism in India, and again, this is a transcendental breakthrough of thought. Later of course Buddhism will spread elsewhere and become a major religion of the world, primarily in East Asia. Zoroastrianism is also a part of this. That’s of course located in the Persian

Empire. But the more important revolutions are the Mediterranean ones in Greece and Israel, the East Asian one, which is the Chinese classical thinkers and the South Asian one, Buddhism.

4.2 Cultural Matrix

Before we get to the classical thinkers of China, I would like to lay down what I would call the cultural matrix in which they rose. And that I think—it is my opinion—can be traced to the Shang. Now of course our sources on the Shang are relatively limited.

We have the oracle bones, bronze inscriptions and actually the oldest book in China (in Chinese civilization), that is, the *Book of the Changes*. Its content actually precedes the rise of Confucianism and Daoism and Legalism.

4.2.1 Shang Religion

What about Shang religion? We only know about certain aspects of Shang thought, which we can see in these relatively few documents, primarily in the oracle bones. I think that you can see within them certain patterns that are developed further along the same lines later by Confucianism and Legalism. Daoism, I think, is off the charts. There is nothing that precedes Daoism. So why do I say this? What is there in Shang religion that would suggest it is a matrix from which Legalism and Confucianism emerge? These were divinatory bones. They were used in telling the future. Within them, though, you can make out the outlines of the fundamental principles of the Shang religion.

4.2.1.1 Functional Specificity

One thing that is very clear is how the ancestors and spirits of various sorts that were of course sacrificed to by the Shang king were beginning to have at least some functional specificity. That is, certain ancestors would have their bailiwicks, their areas in which they were most helpful, and certain spirits had exactly the same thing. Certain ancestors or certain spirits would be best for, let's say, getting rain from, or getting good hunting from, or getting fortunes of war from. And that is, as far as I can see, the foundation upon which the later Legalists built a bureaucracy. A bureaucracy is based upon functional specificity. It's areas of jurisdiction.

4.2.1.2 Emphasis on Role and Rank

There's another aspect to Shang religion and that would also suggest the same thing, and that is the way that the sacrificial calendar was set up. It was set up with mathematical precision—exactly what ancestor or what spirit would be sacrificed to on what days with what sacrifices. On Tuesday, we sacrifice to such and such an ancestor with two white oxen and one black sheep. Of course that's not to be taken literally. But there was a certain procedure that would suggest to a certain extent these were set salaries for the ancestors and the spirits that were marked off specifically according to their rank and role. So I would say that the fundamental concept in Confucianism (i.e., the playing out or attempting to play out certain social roles, multiple roles) is in sync with this emphasis on role and rank in the Shang sacrificial calendar. Role I think is extremely interesting. Sometimes the Shang king would have a dream of an ancestor. He wouldn't remember the name particularly of the ancestor, but he'd remember the rank and the role of that ancestor, which would mean to me that the important thing is not the specific person but the role and rank.

4.2.1.3 Gerontocracy

Another basic principle that seems to emerge is gerontocracy, that is, older is better. As an ancestor "ages," he or she gets "promoted," as it were. Now that seems to me a fundamental notion that plays a role in what we later start calling Confucian thought in one way or another. The notion of filial piety is a form of generationalism. So I see Shang religious thought, at least as far as we can know anything about it, as adumbrating at least two of the three major patterns of thought that are going to be laid down during the classical period, that is, as I said, *Fajia* and *Rujia*.

4.2.2 The Cosmology of Book of Changes

I just also mentioned the oldest Chinese book in existence and that is the *Book of Changes*. It is the only book in this entire period that deals with cosmology, that is, the way that the world works is put together. The other classical philosophers, Confucius or Laozi, are not particularly interested at all in cosmology. Their focuses are elsewhere. It is, however, in the *Book of Changes* that a very clear cosmological picture of the world becomes the basis for later thought, that is, popular thought as in folk religion and higher thought as in high-level thinkers.

4.2.2.1 Cosmological Concept: Unrelenting Flux

Now what is the image of the cosmos that emerges from the *Book of Changes*? It's called the *Book of Changes*. Therefore, the first and foremost quality of this cosmological concept is that the world (the cosmos) is in constant unrelenting flux. Everything is changing every nanosecond and nothing is permanent. However, this flux—this constant change—is a change within certain patterns, according to certain principles. And that's where the notion, for instance, of *yin* and *yang* comes. That is, you can trace patterns within the constant flow of change. You can make out that this is not a chaotic change but a change that is within certain patterns.

4.2.2.2 Content: Hexagram

The content of the *Book of Changes* or the heart of it is not words. That is to say, it is built around trigrams that then form hexagrams, 64 of them. Now what is a trigram? It's a series of three lines, one after the other. By having a solid line, a broken line and other solid line or having a broken line, a solid line and a solid line, you come up with a certain number of trigrams that then if combined into hexagrams, form a total of 64 possibilities. It is very significant that the heart of this cosmological work, or actually the work of divination too, is symbols, not words. That is, to a certain extent, in keeping with later notions—critiques of languages the Daoists make. Now what do I mean by that? The commentary on this hexagram is extremely vague. So you have Hexagram 32—Duration. The commentary runs: “Durations, success, no blame for severance furthers. It furthers one to have somewhere to go. The image, that of thunder and wind, the image of duration. Thus the superior man stands firm and does not change his direction.” Now that kind of statement can mean any number of things, of course. In fact, this is why the book is still popular to a certain extent as a book of divination. This is why it attracts the interest of many important non-Chinese thinkers. In the case of the *Book of Changes*, the psychoanalyst thinker Carl Jung found this work as basically a way of getting to tap the unconscious. And to a certain extent, you can see that that might be the case. It is a method for exploring the unconscious. In any case, it certainly represents the first crystallization of the Chinese mind.

4.3 Generalizations on Classical Thought

The image of the universe overall that emerges is one of a unified organic whole that is self-creating, self-contained and self-operating—a harmonious whole, an organic type of whole. This will have extremely profound consequences, I think, for later Chinese thought.

4.3.1 *Tendency Toward Monism*

These assumptions about the cosmos are really not explicitly mentioned by the classical philosophers. It is primarily because they are taken for granted—these are assumptions about the way the world is and no one questions that the universe is eternal. Among the great civilizations of the world, it is only China that doesn't have a creation myth, that is, the equivalent in the Western world of Genesis. In China, later (i.e., much later, during the Han Dynasty), a creation myth does come out. But it is clearly a creation of that period and does not go back any further. (It's the Pangu story.) This image of the cosmos doesn't have an external lawgiver, an external creator. It is the inherent quality or inherent qualities of the parts that make them act in harmony and make them act the way that they do. They are all in one great big organic, harmonious, inner-penetrating whole.

That is to say, the way of the cosmos will then become the way of humanity, that is, this idea of a harmonious whole of parts which have tension in them—mind you, that is, *yin* and *yang*, and that's what causes things to change, remember—but ultimately are all connected. Some people would argue that in Chinese thought you have a tendency toward philosophical monism and this would fit in with this type of cosmology. So the human world should be a reflection of this kind of cosmos.

4.3.2 *Interdependence*

This is quite a different way of looking at the world from, as far as I can see, any place else. Let's make a specific comparison with the West, specifically the development of Christianity, which of course derives from certain aspects of classical Greek philosophy and Judaism. In it as well as in certain aspects of pre-Christian thought, you have many bifurcations: human versus nature, divine versus human and nature versus divine. These are absolute bifurcations of clearly two different entities that share nothing. In the Chinese case, however, there is an assumption that this is simply not possible. *Yin* and *yang*, for instance, which provide the dynamic of change in the cosmos, are naturally interdependent. If you take away the *yin*, there is no *yang*. If you take away the *yang*, there is no *yin*. They depend upon one another.

What might possibly be relevant to this general image of the cosmos? As I said, it would appear that the *Book of Changes* is a critique of language itself. It does not use at its heart verbiage. And to a certain extent, it's logical that it wouldn't because language is a static instrument. We have to have certain stability of meaning for words to work at all. However, if the universe is in continuous flux, is changing every nanosecond, then by the time a statement is made in words, the situation has changed and is no longer accurate. There's another feature of classical Chinese that might also be relevant to some degree. That is, there is no verb "to be" as it is in I think most other languages. There is indeed a verb "not to be"—*wu*, but no verb "to be," no equivalent of "to be," "to exist," and the various other ways of verbs "to be"

that exist in other languages. This might also have something to do with the way that this cosmos is supposed to operate. There is nothing that can exist by itself as an independent entity. There is no such thing. Everything is interdependent. Even those forces that are in perpetual struggle are not independent. They are one whole with tension between them.

4.3.3 *Eclecticism and Synthesis*

In the West, now let's say, in classical Greek philosophy (Aristotelian philosophy, let's be more specific), there is a certain syllogism—the Law of Identity that is taken for granted. Certainly, it fits in with the way that the Western languages developed. The Law of Identity is that A cannot be B and non-B at the same time. However, with this kind of cosmological view, A can be B and non-B at the same time because there are no absolute bifurcations. There is no absolute B and non-B. Ultimately, everything is identifiable with anything else. And that in turn means that in later Chinese thought (the various permutations of Chinese thought), there is an obvious tendency toward Eclecticism, toward synthesis. It's quite different from the major trends of thought that you see elsewhere and most specially in Western civilization. That is to say, if an entity is judged true and good and another entity is judged true and good, then even though on the surface they might be absolutely diametrically opposed, they can both be incorporated into the same thought because they are ultimately identifiable with one another.

So that's why I think that the first formulation of so-called Confucianism (the first national doctrine, the *guojiao*), which is put together by Dong Zhongshu during the Han dynasty, is above all a work of synthesis, a work indeed of eclectic quality in that many elements that would appear to be mutually incompatible are included. That is true also of popular thought—I mean, the first document that we have of popular thought is the *Taipingjing*, which is a folk religious document of the Latter Han. Now within that you have identifiable, as what you could see, Confucian elements certainly, you have identifiable Daoist elements, you have identifiable Legalist elements and even Mohist elements. Mozi, one of non-canonical thinkers of this period, more or less disappears. After this period, no one seems to pay much attention to him, but he does, too, appear in what is obviously a great synthetic work. So at the high end of high theologians like Dong Zhongshu, and at the low end of folk religion represented by the *Taipingjing*, it is manifestly an eclectic compilation of things as wholes that seem to develop naturally out of these premises that we were just speaking of.

4.3.4 Chronological Primitivism

Another notion shared by all of these thinkers that is not quite comparable to any other civilization is that the good society existed in the past. To a certain extent, in classical Greece and Rome you have similar notions. The Romans talk about the way of the ancestors: when they used to live under oak trees instead of cushy houses and eat acorns to sustain themselves. That was really a Vergilius life, or Hesiod in the Greek case. Also this notion is formally known as Chronological Primitivism.

In the Chinese case, you have this notion in spades, as it were. That is to say, the age of the Three Sage Kings was a kind of paradise when men were moral and everything was perfect. For certainly the period of 2,500 years—after we started having texts that dealt with such things—there is an assumption that our job is to recover that known good society of the past, to strive to return to the heights of the age of the Three Sage Kings. There's nothing quite comparable in other civilizations. It is so central to all thought even the Legalists (the *fajia*) accept that, "Yes, the ancients knew how to do things, but if they were around today, they do things our way." They don't quite actually criticize the ancients for being ancient, for being creators of the good society in the past.

Chapter 5

Confucianism



5.1 A Note on the Term Confucianism

The next topic is in a way a kind of thorny one for me and that is Confucianism. I myself think that these pre-Qin Dynasty thinkers were primarily individual thinkers. The notion of them belonging to schools is something that I think is added by the historians of the Han, Sima Qian and Sima Tan. It is in their *History of the World* (the *Shiji*, the *Records of the Grand Historian*) that we have ancient thinkers being put into boxes as being of the same school, the term “*jia*” indicating school. Sometimes, however, I think that that notion is misunderstood by modern people, especially Westerners, in that the notion of school at that time was quite different from what modern people would think of as a school. There was no exclusivity involved, that is, you could run with Confucius today and somebody else the next day. There was no binary logic involved. There was no “you’re in” versus “you’re out.” In the ancient Middle East and of course Western civilization in general, there is a notion of exclusivity that you are a member of a group or you are not a member of a group. In China, right from the very beginning of what we might call “religious” organizations, that concept is completely absent. You can participate in several groups, in several confessions, simultaneously. That’s the way that things are expected to work.

So I am not entirely comfortable with the notion of Confucianism frankly. I have to use it because it’s the conventional term. But I would admit that there are certain problems with its use, especially by foreigners and by modern people. That is, what it actually refers to in foreign languages (the various forms of words that mean Confucianism in foreign languages) often refers to two very different things often. That is, one, it refers to what could be called the fundamental norms of civilized life. The very basic notion of what it is to be human is also regarded in this way as Confucianism. It also refers to more sophisticated thought, such as Dong Zhongshu’s synthesis that I mentioned, the imperial synthesis of the Han.

Now the notion of fundamental moral and civilizational norms was not called traditionally Confucianism. If you are going to call it anything, it was probably called something like the *sheng xian zhi dao*—the Way of the Sages and Worthies. It

was not referred to as Confucius' thing at all. Confucius might have been the "First Sage," but he was not the only one. He was preceded by many others. He was part of the continuation of certain fundamental notions of morality, of social behavior, and of what it meant to be a civilized human being.

5.2 Confucius and *The Analects*

Having said that, we do know that Confucius was a real person, that is, authentically he existed and *The Analects* (*Lunyu*) is his book. Obviously, he didn't write it. It appears to be a kind of collection of "class notes" by his students that were assembled later. But it is identifiably his thought. To a certain extent, you might say that it is the first book to be ascribed to a person. The other, the Daoist work, is very hard to say whether there was a real Laozi who did any composing. But *The Analects* was definitely Confucius' thought and his creation by "second hand" perhaps. He is also authentically China's first teacher and so even today in certain places his birthday, which might of course not be his birthday, is the Teachers' Day or Education Day.

5.2.1 *Origin of the Term "Confucianism" in the West*

So why do we have this term in the West? And then in the early twentieth century, it started being used in China in the same way, that is, *Rujia*. It is because of the Jesuits, that is, the first missionaries to China from the West who arrived actually in the sixteenth century. The first important ones, as I said, being Mateo Ricci and a few other Italians, had their own agenda. Their agenda was to show a China that didn't have any real comparable religion. They wanted to describe the Chinese mainstream in some fashion, so they took Kongfuzi (Confucius), the "First Sage," as representative of all these values. They were doing that specifically because they hoped to dereligionize these values so that they could argue back home in Europe (in Rome basically) that there was no incompatibility between China's basic values, which were not religious, and Christianity. That was their general strategy. And it is the Jesuits who first described China to Europe. We have, of course, Marco Polo before but that book was regarded more or less as a fable and was not systematic at all. So the first descriptions of Chinese civilization that reached Europe are by the Jesuits. And they started using this term "Confucianism" so that's why forever after certainly Western languages and later other languages as well have what we would consider misnomer of a Confucian school.

5.2.2 The Analects

The Analects themselves appear tame and bland. There are no structured arguments. There are simply statements that appeal to what one assumes to be a superior ethical system of moral standards. Period. There's no argument about anything; that is, marshaling of evidence or of syllogisms to try to prove anything. It is also not concerned with anything except society and government. It does not go into other areas. Of course there are two statements in *The Analects* that Confucius didn't talk about those sorts of things. Somebody asked him about them, and his answer is, "You don't even know how to serve humans in this world. Why are you talking about how to serve spirits?" And therefore, the Jesuits were partially right in that the spiritual dimension of, say, Confucius in *The Analects* was not manifestly clear. I should add that this notion that Confucius didn't have a religious side or Confucianism didn't have a religious side (that was purely a secular system of ethics) was reinforced in the twentieth century when Chinese intellectuals presented to the world a notion that China didn't have any religion. It had only a system of ethics that was called Confucianism. It had no religions to mention. This, in my opinion, is not completely true and I will tell you why shortly.

5.2.3 Basic Concepts in The Analects

5.2.3.1 *Li*

One way of approaching *The Analects* and understanding the thought of Confucius is to talk about the fundamental concepts within. One of the foremost is the concept of *Li*, and the word *Li* is extremely interesting. It's this character 礼. It has many meanings, many layers of meanings. It has been translated in innumerable ways, sometimes as "ceremony" or "rites," referring to the actual ceremonies that are performed on certain occasions. It has been referred to as "social propriety according to status," which of course has nothing to do with rites or ceremony.

Now how can these words and concepts contain both? Let us go back to the Shang for a moment. In Shang religion, from what we can gather from the Oracle Bones, there was a great emphasis on performing the ceremony (sacrificial rite) correctly. If the harvest was not good, or if a battle against the barbarians was lost, the reason that would be given was that the rite, the ceremony, was not performed correctly. This is referring to an objective code of actions/behavior—certain formulated ways that you hold your fingers when you pick up the wine cup, or what the precise nature of the sacrificial beasts would be. In other words, there is an emphasis on the "letter of the law."

Confucius carries on the tradition. That is, he also cares about form; he also cares about correct rites. He says things such as "Having eight rows of dancers in the courtyard that the Ji clan does, I mean. If this can be tolerated, then what can't be

tolerated?" And to a certain extent, he's referring to the incorrect nature of the number of rows of dancers. That is, it was the Son of Heaven's privilege or right to have eight rows of dancers, no one else's. Nevertheless, he is calling attention to the "letter of the law." However, his contribution to the transcendental revolution of the time (to the Axial Age) is to spiritualize, to internalize the *Li*, to make it rather than a question of performing the ritual exactly as described in the ritual manual but a question of a certain inner discipline, a certain inner state of the soul, I suppose you could say.

When I mentioned the way he's always wailing about spoken language, he also wails against appearances of all sorts. He does not like appearances. Obviously, his emphasis is going to be on interior. I will give you a few examples of what I mean. Lin Fang asks Confucius about the *Li* and he says, "Ah, an excellent question. [I am glad you brought it up.] In *Li*, I prefer to be frugal rather than to put on the great show—*yuqi she ye, ning jian*. (I prefer to not put my emphasis upon the externals of the *Li*.) You are spending a lot of money to have punctilious observation of every little aspect of the *Li*; I prefer frugality—*sang, yuqi yi ye, ning qi*," which means essentially in the case of funerals, I prefer real sorrow (feelings from the inside, sentiments of sorrow emanating from the within) rather than a punctilious observation of the details of the funeral rites.

This would be one example, but there are many others. "*Li, Li*, does *Li* only refer to jade and silk? Music, music, does music only refer to drums and bells?" It, of course, is a rhetorical question. The implication of course is that: no, these are mere surface manifestations; the important part is the interior. That is, a kind of the subjective state is the key, not as was the case, one could say, prior to this time. We can tell at least in the Shang it was the case: the emphasis was on the external behavior rather than the internal state.

Someone asks Confucius about Filial Piety. The point that he makes is that, "Well, these days what they are calling filial piety is merely to support parents (that is, nourish them, give them food), but even horses and dogs, they had something along those lines without 'reverence'—*jing* (敬) And what is the difference between the horses and the dogs and a human being without respect?"

It would be one of those examples whereby he stresses once more the interior state.

So having said that Confucius subjectivizes the *Li*, does he have no regard at all for the external ceremony? And what is the connection between the notion of rites or ceremony and the larger notion of actions in society? One of the many definitions of the *Li* is the rules of social propriety according to social status. What is the connection between the two? I see it as—again going back to the Shang—a moral imperative to perform certain roles correctly. That is, when you engage in a ceremony, you are playing a role. When you are in society, (of course everybody has multiple roles), you are also attempting to approximate the ideal performance of those roles. In other words, the *Li* is life and life is the *Li*. It is all focused on achievement of the ideal performance of roles.

5.2.3.2 *Ren*

With the interior state being the key, in the end, if you succeed, you achieve the supreme virtue. In *The Analects*, the supreme virtue, the inner state of excellence that makes a truly successful and moral human being, is called the *Ren*.

Confucius is very cagey about *Ren*. He never defines it. He always says things about it that are situational: in this case, talking about so and so, such and such might be *Ren*; in another case, he gives another definition. In the same way of course, all of his explanations about filial piety, for instance, are similarly situational. There are no absolute principles involved, even though he claims at one point there is a certain thread that runs through all of his thoughts. What he actually says is always particular about a concrete situation.

So for the state of the soul of the supreme virtue—the *Ren*, how do you get to it? Did he get to it? Did he achieve it? He's sort of cagey about that, but there is one statement in which he reviewed his life, "When I was fifteen, I set my mind on study. When I was thirty, I established myself," and so on until he got to the age of seventy. And then at seventy, he said essentially that "I was able to follow my desires, the natural desires arising from my interior, from my heart—*cong xin suo yu*, and not transgress against the rules—*bu yuju*." Now what does that mean? I think it implies that at age seventy, he finally achieved complete unity of the external roles and his internal state. There was no distance any more. He internalized the rules of roles themselves so that he wasn't "performing" any more. He had achieved the unity of roles that were essentially moral obligations of one sort or another and his interior state. That is certainly one explanation, in any case, but as I said, he only talks about the *Ren* in particular situations—he never gives an absolute definition of it.

5.2.3.3 *Junzi*

Another key term in *The Analects* is *Junzi*. The *Junzi* is translated usually as the "true gentleman," the "superior person" or the "morally superior person." It literally means of course the "son of a lord," in other words, aristocrat. This is very interesting because he is saying that a true superior man acts like an aristocrat, but he doesn't have to be born into the aristocracy. He is a moral aristocrat. And it is this type of person—a moral aristocrat—who should be the elite of society and be part of the government.

This is a key concept because at the time there was still aristocracy, and he was in a way criticizing it, I mean, sometimes very directly saying that these were a bunch of luxury-loving bums (they don't do anything). But he still had this ideal of a moral aristocrat, the way that an aristocrat should act as a standard. He just removed the hereditary part so that he was no longer talking about hereditary status—he was talking about the original standards of behavior that aristocrats should have.

So in other words, Confucius was arguing essentially for meritocracy. That is, how do you get to be a *Junzi*? How do you get to be a morally superior man as well as an intellectually superior one? You do that through education. Confucius has the

statement “*you jiao wu lei*”; in education, there are no distinctions. Education is an equal playing field. And this to a certain extent is the basis of the later development of what would become the civil service examination. That is, a meritocracy creates the elite of society as well as the leaders in government.

There’s one especially Chinese aspect in all of this that I should point out. In Chinese tradition, certainly by this time, there is an association between the process of education and moral betterment. That is, the two tend to be associated. So Confucius is saying: yes, the elite of society and the leaders in government should be morally superior people; they should also be educated. In other words, he seems to be calling for elite of the best, that is, the best morally, as well as the brightest. That is, intellectual improvement goes hand in hand with and is inseparable from moral improvement.

Another aspect to the way that a *Junzi* rules, as opposed to the then current types, is that he rules not by force but by moral influence. The ideal that his virtue would be so powerful that as an efficacious effect it radiates outward and influences people is in connection with this.

Ji Kang asks Confucius about government, saying, “What do you say the killing of the unprincipled for the good of the principled people?” Confucius replied, “Sir, in carrying on your government, why should you use killing at all? Let your evinced desires be for what is good and people will be good. The relation between superior and inferior is like that between the wind and the grass. The grass must bend when the wind blows across it.”

Now that wind is referring to moral influence by example or by virtuous conduct, that is, my evinced desires for the good of the people. To a certain extent, this is also a beginning of a later feature of Chinese government. That is, it actually at least in rhetoric, calls for a government being conducted for the welfare of the masses of the people. Now this is again something you don’t find anywhere else in the world. You do not find it in the contemporary civilizations of that time—the notion of a service-oriented government.

This morally superior person, this *Junzi*, is a moral paragon and rules/influences people primarily through his virtue, his moral influence. This is crucial to the Confucian ideal of rulership. At the same time though, he is not a specialist. That is to say, in *The Analects*, there is a sentence “*junzi buqi*,” that is, the morally superior person is not a mere instrument—he is not a specialist of one sort or another. And for the next 2,000 some years, the ideal of rulership will be a generalist—someone who has improved himself morally as well as intellectually but not learnt a specialty. So later officials were all generalists. I am an official at certain county somewhere. I don’t know anything about hydraulics or water control or crop betterment or accounting or tax matters. I have staff of specialists in such things. My job as an official is to essentially be moral and act morally as well as be more intelligently than others.

There is also within Confucius, along with the emphasis upon moral suasion as the primary instrument of government, an antipathy toward law. That is to say, law, he suggests, would merely invite people to find loopholes unless you change their interiors and their fundamental moral attitudes. Laws will not succeed because the population will be a population simply scheming to get around the laws that you set up. The permanent solution is that everyone morally improves themselves.

5.2.3.4 *Xiao*

We all know that filial piety is a central Confucian virtue. Sometimes, however, this is misunderstood. It does not refer simply to minor children listening to their parents; it refers to moral choices that are made. If a little child obeys his parents, what he's doing of course is what he'd better do; otherwise, the physically superior parents will punish him physically. The parent, the larger, stronger person, can rule by force. But for instance, in the Han, there are "24 Stories of Outstanding Filial Piety." None of them have to do with children. They all have to do with adult children serving aged parents in one way or another. Usually, these are quite extreme: "Oh we're having a famine, but don't worry, daddy. I'll just slice off a piece of my leg here and you'll be alright," or "Oh, there is a tiger. Don't worry, dad. I'll kill it with my bare hands," and so on and so forth. But the point is that that relationship is now reversed, and the physically superior person is the child, not the parent who is now aged and weaker. So it is a moral choice to act filially. It is no longer something that is essentially forced upon you by superior force.

The notion of filial piety, I would suggest, might have been adumbrated in Shang religion because, as I said, there is a fundamental principle of "generationalism" involved and it is clearly manifested in the oracle bones. And I would say that generationalism or gerontocracy suggests something like filial piety. Of course all civilizations have this term—I mean the Romans, for instance; it is just so much more central in China. And I think as I said it's because of the fundamental cultural matrix that was already created in the Shang, and it developed further in certain directions.

The other aspect to filial piety is that as a member of a family, you are playing social roles. Everybody will have multiple social roles. In this case, the children are in a superior-inferior relationship with their parents. In fact, Chinese ethical relationships are made up of interlocking superior-inferior relationships. That is, the moral bonds are in that way: they pyramid upward in certain respects because everybody has someone who is superior, and at the same time, as they pyramid upward, they multiply. That is, I might be the son of my father, but I am also a father myself or I am an uncle, or I am something else that would put me into a superior position of other superior-inferior relationships. As I said, so the pyramid goes upward to essentially the emperor. And who is the emperor? He is the Son of Heaven. He, too, is in a superior-inferior relationship. He might be the supreme spiritual authority, but he, too, has to act in certain ways to serve his superior, in that case, Heaven.

Another aspect to this is the way in which the family, kin relations, serves as a training ground for moral behavior. You learn to be a true human by performing your moral roles within the kin structure. That's the way that you learn how to act in society. So family itself is the training ground for fulfilling moral obligations. In other words, that's the place where morality gets learned.

The virtue of filial piety, that is, *Xiao*, illustrates a fundamental principle of all Chinese ethics. That is the concept of reciprocity, *bao*. Now what is *Xiao*? What is filial piety? What is its connection to this notion of reciprocity? This can be illustrated by a very vivid example that occurs in the law. Let's say, a few hundred

years ago, there were of course various types of capital punishment (various ways of executing people). Depending upon the severity of crime, you'd be executed by various methods. In that hierarchy of executions, garroting (that is to say, strangulation with a cord) was a milder punishment than beheading (simply removing the head). Now looking at this on the surface, it doesn't make any sense. Garroting is excruciatingly painful and it takes several minutes. I don't know if any of you have seen *The Godfather*, but when Luca Brasi gets assassinated in that bar, he's garroted, right? And it isn't pleasant. It takes several minutes to accomplish it. It's a very terrible way to die whereas beheading is very quick, as somebody said, "*you tong ye kuai, suoyi hen tongkuai*." That is to say, it's quick and painful, and therefore very pleasant. A joke, a joke. Now the reason is connected with filial piety. By having your head cut off, you are being most unfilial. Why? What do you owe your old parents essentially? You owe them of course protection and nourishment and so on when you're young, and you owe them essentially everything because they created you. Therefore, destroying your body in a relatively painless way is a most unfilial act because this isn't your body; this is your parents' body that you're having dismembered. And therefore, it is most unfilial to dismember this property of your parents. So the connection is, in the case of filial piety, you owe the other party (i.e., your parents) everything, including your body.

5.2.3.5 *Dao*

Another fundamental concept that appears in *The Analects* and that is developed further after Confucius is the concept of the Dao. Many people associated the Dao only with the Daoists. But of course the Dao, meaning "the Way," is in a way any path that is the normal one. In this case, the Dao is the basic principle of the cosmos, the way that the ultimate pattern works. When you get in line with the Dao, you are acting according to rules. You are ideally in line with the Dao when you follow your own innate desires because you are part of a great harmonious whole. Therefore, once you get in groove with the Dao, you realize your true nature as a human being. This does not come easily, however, even in *The Analects* and more so in later Confucians such as Mencius. Self-cultivation is important. That is, it is an important part of the way for humans to achieve true humanity. There's a continuous process of moral and intellectual betterment and self-improvement.

Finally, I would point out that Confucius in *The Analects* doesn't mention any absolutes. As I said, he tends to define things in terms of concrete situations. Someone asks him about so and so, is he filial? He'll give one answer about what filiality is all about. Someone brings up another situation with him; he'll say, well, actually that's filial in that situation for that person. So there are no absolutes, absolute principles or unalterable principles that one thinks of, as you know, fundamental to his way, or to the way of the universe. It's always relative. And this is to a certain extent the basis of the later proclivity toward the Mean, toward compromise, toward the middle path, no extremes. This of course is again a central value of Chinese civilization, one that fits in with the patterns of one great big harmonious whole.

5.3 Mencius

The second most important of the Ru, or we might call Confucian thinkers, of the classical period is Mencius (Mengzi). He lived quite a bit after Confucius but was associated with him because as I said he was classified by the historians of the Han as being a member of the Ru School. For the most part, he did follow along the same path that Confucius had started. But because the situation that he lived in was quite different from that of Confucius' time, his doctrine to the rulers of the various feudal states was somewhat different. He, like Confucius, went from state to state, trying to persuade the rulers of those states to follow his advice, to hire him as advisor or prime minister or something and to put into effect his formula for good government. By the time Mencius emerged, the competition between states had intensified enormously. The latter part of this period is now called the Warring States Period. The name given to that former period of classical thought was the Spring and Autumn Period because that's the period which the *Spring and Autumn Annals* covers as history.

5.3.1 Mencius' Message: You Will Do Well by Doing Right

When we get to this latter period of intensified competition, Mencius was trying to push the practical aspects of his doctrine. In other words, he was telling people, "Look, we are in all-out competition here. If you want to emerge as a final victor of this all-out competition among states, you do things my way and it's also the right thing to do. It is also the most practical thing to do. In doing right, you will do very well." That's the essential message. Central to this is the idea that if you treat your people well, if you are a proper moral paragon, if you rule not by force but by moral influence and by cultivated virtue, then the people of the entire world will all come to you. They will want to be your subjects. Therefore, you will have more people on your side, and then, you will win. People of the world "with their necks stretched" will rush to be members of your state because you treat the people so well. So this message that he has is heavier on the practical benefits than Confucius was. At the same time, of course this message is prescriptive as well. He has a prescription based upon moral standards, based upon morality, based upon what is right to do. So as I said, doing right will make you do very well.

There's a second aspect to this, however. That is, doing "right." Mencius goes further than Confucius does in the subjectification of things, in making the interior of the human being (the soul) the center of moral gravity, as it were. He argues that human beings have an innate knowledge of what is good. They have a conscience that they are born with. And therefore if you—I guess you'd say—cultivate this conscience, you will have knowledge of the good. And it is in your nature as a human being to do that. In other words, this intuitive knowledge that you have of what is right is natural to you. And it is, as I said, an interior condition that human beings are born with.

Does that mean that everybody should just go about doing what their interior states dictate? No. He puts the knowledge of the good (morality) in tension with self-aggrandizement (the seeking of power and profit). So when he went to see King Hui of Liang for instance, King Hui said, “Oh, yes, well, you’ve come all this way. You certainly must have something to say that could profit my state.” And Mencius of course replied, “*Wang hebi yue li?*—Why you want to talk about profit, your majesty?” He then turned the topic of conversation back to what is right. Throughout his thought, and indeed throughout all mainstream Confucian, or mainstream Chinese thought, there is this tension between self-aggrandizing, self-benefit and the standards of what is right. Mencius expresses this in various ways. Sometimes he puts them in a hierarchy. That is, he likes fish, and he likes bear paws. Ah, well, if you can’t have both, what would you choose? One, or the other? In the same way, he loves his life, but he also loves righteousness. So in the same way that he will prefer bear paws over fish, he will prefer righteousness over life. It’s not as though that all desires are evil. It’s that certain desires are evil because they are misguided. So his entire enterprise is all about finding out through an interior journey and through self-cultivation what is right and then of course it would be natural to act upon this knowledge and behave morally.

So he then tells King Hui of Liang: “Look, there’s a practical side to being moral, to acting right, to treating your people well. It has a practical benefit that will benefit you in this competition. That is to say, if you act as a moral person, then your subjects will also imitate you. If you act as a selfish person, only concerning yourself with profit, then your people will also only concern themselves with individual profit. And this is not good for your state. They will not help you in this overall competition to win All under Heaven, to win the world.” So as usual, Mencius’ message is by doing right, by doing good, you’ll do very well.

5.3.2 *Other Principles in The Mencius*

Other principles that you can deduce from the book, *The Mencius*, are economic in nature. That is, Mencius’ basic attitude is that if the king interferes less in the affairs of the people, they will naturally be well off economically. The problem usually is the demand of the state on the people. So in a way, Mencius is arguing for a *laissez faire* attitude of the state toward economic matters, against interventions of any sort.

And this notion is in direct contrast to another notion that is equally powerful—that the state should solve problems of economic distribution. So it’s interwoven with this attitude of *laissez faire*. You see both attitudes exemplified throughout the following 2,000 some years of history. So, on the one hand, there is a notion that if you let society alone, the population will grow, and that at that time is the fundamental measure of success. And of course it helps you when your population is growing in this ultimate competition among the states. And the people themselves through following their own lives will take care of the economy. The standard of living will be higher. However, there is another problem with this, that is, inequality

of economic status within society. So sometimes the Chinese state will try to do these impossible things, such as in the later period something that was called *juntian* (the equal-field) system, whereby the state would in principle own all of the land and redistribute it periodically so that land holdings will be kept more or less equal. So within Confucian thought, within Chinese thought, there are these two notions of what is the best economic policy, depending upon what you want to achieve. Confucius in *The Analects* themselves is somewhat ambiguous on this, except that there is a statement that “*bu huan gua er huan bujun*.” Don’t worry about there being too little; don’t worry about scarcity; worry about what you do have being distributed unequally. It is also that notion that leads to state-heavy schemes, plans, such as the equal-field system.

How does the governor, the ruler, or the elite cultivate those emotions that would lead him to treat the people well, to govern society well, to look out society’s interests rather than the state’s? He cultivates certain emotions that are natural and innate. In another scene in *The Mencius*, the king sees an ox that’s being led to the sacrificial ground to be of course killed and the ox is trembling. And this so moves the King. A sympathy arises within him so that he says, “Oh, we’ll take the ox back and sacrifice something else. I just can’t stand to see that ox trembling and being frightened as it is led to its death.” Now Mencius says, “Good... you have this basic emotion.” You simply extend it to your people, to society in general. You have this empathy with an ox. So you take the same emotion and you simply enlarge it to include your people in general. This is a fundamental notion in *The Mencius* and it will again be the center of how you make yourself morally better, how you cultivate yourself morally—you try to amplify those kinds of natural feelings at the expense of others.

5.3.3 *Mencius vs. Xunzi: A Debate on Human Nature*

Another, perhaps the most fundamental and at the same time the most famous of Mencius’ ideas has to do with human nature. He has a disagreement, I suppose you could say, with another Confucian, Xunzi, over this issue. Xunzi’s stance is that a human being is born into the world as basically a little naked ape—it is born with appetites that are without limit. And so the human being is this machine that craves food, sex and other biologically generated things. And so his general notion is that you have to civilize, you have to tame, you have to make moral the naked ape by inculcation from the outside of certain rules, that is, again the *Li*—the rules of propriety according to status or rites/ceremonies and those other meanings that we’ve discussed.

This idea that Xunzi has appeals very much to the Western mind; that is, the Judeo-Christian mindset can understand that very well. It reminds one very much of the Old Testament, an angry Jehovah continually being angry at the people who do not behave as he has dictated. And so human nature has to have discipline from the outside in order to become truly human. This is an external-to-internal process. It’s

as though the little naked ape is going to be trained like any other animal through a process of carrot and stick, of reward and punishment, of behavioristic treatment.

Mencius takes precisely the opposite stance. That is, the child born into the world is not a naked ape; the child is born with the knowledge of the good. In fact, he goes even further and says that “*Dazhe* (the great man) does not lose the heart of an infant, that is, the *chizhixin* (the psychological state or the spiritual state of a newly-born infant).” The idea of course is that it’s not the environment that’s going to make the young human human, it is the environment that’s the problem. The human comes into the world with the knowledge of the good that’s inherent. The problem is that as time passes, the evil environment starts influencing that original knowledge of the good.

So Mencius’ approach is precisely the opposite: you want to cultivate the interior, the inside, the heart/mind in order to resist the influences of the environment. You don’t want the environment to go from the outside into the human; you want the human to strengthen the inherent knowledge of the good that he or she is born with. That is of course a stark difference. In general, especially after the eighth century, ninth century or so, it’s the Mencian wing of Confucianism that is dominant. And this general approach reaches an extreme in a way in the late Ming in the sixteenth century with Wang Yangming and students of Wang Yangming who just extended that general premise to its limits.

So the heart of Mencius’ enterprise—the great enterprise of becoming a truly human being or becoming a moral person—is in the interior. It is a process of self-cultivation and of course as I said always associated with intellectual self-improvement. That is what we put in Western terms the path to salvation for the human being.

5.4 Comparisons Between Confucius and Mencius

5.4.1 *Enthusiasm About the Moral Enterprise*

Mencius is different from Confucius in that he wants people to be highly enthusiastic about this enterprise. He doesn’t want any lukewarm or half measures in the pursuance of these goals. He’s also against the *kuang* (he’s also against true fanaticism about this), but he is even more against the “goody two-shoes” (the *xiangyuan*) who just goes along with things for appearance’s sake. He wants people who are enthusiastic about the enterprise to become a moral person. One of his little stories is militaristic in nature. Two armies confront each other. Part of one army runs backward, retreats a hundred paces; the other part of the army runs backward, retreats fifty paces, and so those who ran only fifty paces back then laugh at the cowardice of those who ran a hundred paces back—*wushi bu xiao bai bu*. Mencius says: No, no, no, no. It’s all the same. They both ran. We want total commitment. We want total commitment to this enterprise of becoming a moral person. We don’t want any halfway matters;

both of the groups ran. The important thing is we want total commitment, complete devotion; we don't want halfway measures. So there is no difference between those who ran fifty paces and those who ran a hundred paces.

5.4.2 *Hierarchy and Gradations*

In *The Mencius*, as in *The Analects*, there is certain problem with degrees of moral obligation. That is to say, in *The Analects*, you have a conflict between duty to the state (or to the ruler) and duty to the family (or duty of filial piety). In *The Mencius*, you have the same kind of thing. From these texts, you eventually get the image of a series of concentric circles with the innermost circle being ego, and those circles radiate outward, each representing a moral bond with ego. So there are gradations of moral obligation. Some are more important than others. Mencius does discuss somewhat the way in whose wine cup I fill first. He discusses that there are certain conflicts that appear in these general criteria for moral obligations: Which is closer? Which is the further away? But the notion of gradations of moral obligation is permanent. It stays there.

It was directly challenged by Buddhism when it arrived and indeed in the same period as Mencius, we have Mozi, another philosopher who did want to do away with all gradations as well. I'll discuss him in a moment. Now that question of gradations—who you owe the most to—is usually situational logic. That is, in this situation, this moral obligation is more important; in that situation, it might be different.

5.4.3 *Egalitarianism*

Another area in which Mencius goes well beyond Confucius in *The Analects* is the question of egalitarianism; that is, people are equal in some fashion. In *The Analects*, you don't have too strong a notion of egalitarianism. Confucius does say in education there are no distinctions and all of that. But in the end, he assumes a hierarchy. He assumes a rigid hierarchy between the *Junzi* (the morally superior people) and the *Xiaoren* (the mean people for whom moral considerations are somewhat foreign). What Mencius does though is to expand upon the notion that anyone (any human being) is capable of moral perfection, thus more egalitarian. Cao Jiao said to Mencius, "It is said that all men can become Yao and Shun." And Mencius says, "Yes, that's the way it is." This is in a way quite revolutionary that anyone, no matter what their social status, or their situation, or their inherent endowments, has within their power to become perfect morally, to achieve the *Ren*, to achieve the supreme state of grace. And what does it go back to? It goes back to individual effort, to self-cultivation. This notion of continuous striving to be better intellectually and morally is at the center of Chinese culture. It doesn't go away. You can still see this whatever principle in operation today.

5.4.4 *Duty of the Elite Toward Society*

In *The Mencius*, you have a further intensification, a strengthening of the notion that the elite owe society; that is, the elite are responsible for the state of society. This goes along with the idea of empathy to some degree in which Mencius says, “When Yu thinks of somebody drowning, he would feel as though he himself was drowned.” That is, the sage emperors (people like Yu) had perfect empathy. Now the person drowning would be the subject of Yu—the ruled person, and yet the ruler would have a complete identical emotional state as the subject. This is the basis partially of the notion that the elites (the rulers) owe the ruled something.

That doesn’t mean, however, that Mencius is even coming close to advocating a society in which the elites don’t have their place. There is another famous passage in which he states “*zhi yu ren zhe shi ren, zhi ren zhe shi yu ren, tian xia zhi tong yi ye.*” That means those who rule others are supported by them, that is, economically; in other words, they live off the labor of their subjects; those who are ruled of course support them. This is a universal principle throughout the world. This is that way. So he says that those who labor with their mind—as the natural law—rule over and are supported by *laolizhe*, the people who work with their bodies. And this will remain until very recently—a kind of iron divide between people who do manual labor and those who don’t. There were countless ways throughout Chinese history that people tried to manifest this ability to labor with their mind, and therefore not to labor with their bodies. As certain social conventions that are taken, the growing of long fingernails, for instance, would state that, “You see, I don’t have to turn over my hand in any labor. I’m not a *laolizhe*. I’m definitely a *laoxinzhe*. I am not a worker with my body. I am a worker with my mind.” So it is not as though Mencius is arguing that when the elites are responsible for society there is no hierarchy involved.

So on the one hand, there is an ironclad hierarchy. On the other hand, even those who are ruled, even those who labor with their body, in principle can become as virtuous as those who rule over them. It all depends on their own efforts. In other words, humans can change. And this notion of course is a further development of what *The Analects* have to say and it turns out eventually to be realized in the civil service examination system. That is, those who end up ruling can be anybody as long as through their own efforts they cultivate themselves and they get smarter and better morally—they end up being the elite. So that notion which starts in *The Analects* and is carried further in *The Mencius* is another one of those fundamental concepts that has been at the heart of Chinese civilization.

Chapter 6

Daoism and Other Schools of Thought



6.1 Daoism

We are now going to discuss another one of those broader classifications, one of those -isms that arose during the Period of the Hundred Schools and that is Daoism. There are two basic classics to Daoism: one is *The Way and Its Power* (*Daodejing*), and the other is *The Zhuangzi*. *The Way and Its Power* was allegedly written by someone named Laozi, but that's very difficult to say. We do know, however, Zhuangzi, the author of *The Zhuangzi*, was a real person. Zhuangzi is later; Laozi is before.

As I said, there's nothing in the oracle bones—in what we can find of the Shang dynasty cultural matrix—that adumbrates in any fashion the content of Daoist thought. However, Daoist thought is indeed adumbrated. In fact, you could see it as a further development of something preceding it and that is the earliest book ever in Chinese history that we've already discussed, *The Book of Changes*. It shares the same assumptions as *The Book of Changes* and these works share the same cosmological and others assumptions as *The Book of Changes*, and clearly are part of the same tradition. Daoism is a further development of *The Book of Changes*, of what *The Book of Changes* represents in terms of thought.

6.1.1 Daodejing

One of the features that I had mentioned concerning *The Book of Changes* is that the heart of it are symbols, trigrams, hexagrams rather than words. And this has to do with the nature of reality—the constant flux. Therefore, words, which are static instruments, are simply incapable of grasping the nature of true reality.

6.1.1.1 A Critique of Language

So too in the *Daodejing*, we have the same assumption stated in one way or another. Of course the *Daodejing* is so vague that it can be interpreted in innumerable ways. It is in fact one of the most translated books in the world precisely because you can interpret it in so many ways. It is a series of poem-like, very terse, laconic statements, not at all like a structured argument. It is more like poetry. It starts out with this statement, which is clearly a critique of language—“*dao ke dao, fei chang dao; ming ke ming, fei chang ming.*” That is to say, the *dao* that can be spoken of is not the eternal, the constant *dao*. The name that can be named with words is not the constant or the eternal name. Later there is an even more explicate critique of language, which has “*zhi zhe bu yan, yan zhe bu zhi.*” Those who really know, who know reality, who are in the know of the cosmos don’t say anything; they do not speak. Those who do speak don’t know. In other words, language itself is a very inadequate instrument to attempt to grasp the nature of true reality.

6.1.1.2 A Work of Mysticism

The entire work would be considered by all foreign or Western standards a work of mysticism. In the West, for instance, you have the same notion of a reality behind the surface that we see every day. So religious mystics in the West are basically adopting the same posture toward this. That is, all the surface, all that can be talked about, all that can be understood in purely intellectual terms does not represent the true reality behind it. I mean, the true reality behind it has various names in various traditions. But the notion of there being a reality behind what we see—which is the true reality—is shared with the Daoism. So it is very definitely a mysticism of a sort. It also shares with many modern notions—this critique of language as being inadequate to convey the important things. There are long traditions of this. Most recently, things like critical theory or post-modernism, or prior to that, things like French vitalism—Henri Bergson, for instance—would basically be sharing the same critique of languages being inadequate.

6.1.1.3 A Critique of Morality

So where did this notion come from? It is clear enough I think that the *Daodejing* comes about after Confucius. And to a certain extent, it can be read as a response to Confucius or mainstream thought. Its basic critique is of society in general; that is to say, the whole enterprise of morality, or the enterprise of becoming morally better and so on, is essentially nonsense. Morality is invented by men. It has nothing to do with the true reality, the *dao* that just keeps flowing. I often think in fact that there is inherent in both the *Daodejing* and *The Zhuangzi* a kind of satire of the speechifying and moralizing that Confucius and his ilk are doing—the more you talk about good and evil, the more you are creating evil.

6.1.1.4 Cosmological Assumptions

The core image of Daoism has nothing to do with distinctions, with dividing things, with what language does—it makes distinctions. The core image of Daoism is the uncarved block or an unbroken whole that maintains its integrity as one entity, one piece. Once you start trying to carve out parts of it, to make distinctions, then it loses its integrity and it's ruined. In the *Daodejing*, you have again and again these notions that the ten thousand things (i.e., what we see in the world) come from nothing and go back into nothing. That is a constant process whereby the world is produced and then goes back into the void of non-existence, which is a very different notion of course from the other assumptions about things that you find in the Confucian tradition.

6.1.1.5 Daoism vs. Buddhism

Some people might think that because Daoism is mysticism and it's kind of other-worldly, so it would have certain resemblances to Buddhism. In fact, when Buddhism arrived in China, it was interpreted as a form of Daoism and Daoist terms were used in the translation of Buddhist terms, but the two are completely different, utterly different. In Buddhism, nature is denied; nature is negated completely. That is to say, nature is evil. In Daoism, nature is affirmed in spades and is exceedingly affirmed. That is, if it's natural, it's good. Nature is the final criterion. Nature is of course manifestation of the *Dao* emerging or just rolling along there.

6.1.1.6 *Dao* vs. Heaven

It's also different from the more Confucian notion of Heaven. The *Dao* is definitely not Heaven. It is definitely not, as in the Western sense, God. In the case of Heaven (of *Tian*), in *The Analects* it appears as almost an anthropomorphic entity. Confucius talks about Heaven “willing” something or another. And in *The Mencius*, it's very clear that Heaven can take sides in the world, take sides to support the morally superior people, those who do right as opposed to wrong. In the Daoist conception, there is no such connection. The *Dao* does not “will”; it just acts, and it just keeps flowing. It's like the seasons or anything else. The will has nothing to do with it. It just keeps rolling along. So the *Dao*, in contrast to *Tian* or God or other entities in other religious predictions of that sort, is totally indifferent to human concerns. That's why it doesn't back one moral system over another. It is indifferent to it. It just keeps rolling along. So the general rule is, in Daoism, if it is natural, it's good.

6.1.1.7 The Notion of *Wuwei*

Now how can one be natural? Now the first rule is *Wuwei*—purposeless action, or non-action. You don't ever do anything with a planned purpose. You don't ever try to

use your intellect to plan or make efforts toward a goal because that way you've lost before you start. But there is a basic contradiction in all of this: how are you going to achieve the state of non-action without putting forth effort to achieve it? It is of course difficult to do. In fact that would be impossible. So *Wuwei* (doing nothing) will result somehow in everything being done because nature will take its course. When I act, I act just naturally. I go with the flow, the natural flow. I do not concern myself with anything else. It's in the nature of things that the cosmos operates in this fashion. I am merely an expression of the cosmos like a plant or an animal. I act without this conscious planning, without using words to make distinctions. I act in full integrity. I act without purpose. Once you start introducing the mind, ratiocinations, then the naturalness, the *Dao* is lost.

That doesn't mean, however, that Laozi is calling for just flying around the place and enjoying yourself, that is, giving free reign to whatever appetites you have. In fact, there is throughout the *Daodejing* a preference for the colorless, the tasteless and the odorless. Water is the favored substance. *Yin*, as opposed to *Yang* (feminine, as opposed to masculine) in principle, are favored. In the same way that water, which is the softest substance, can wear away rock, which is the hardest substance, you by non-action can achieve everything. So Laozi is not calling for gourmets, that is, people who really know how to enjoy life, because after all to become a gourmet, you have to put a lot of effort into it: you have to use your mind; you have to study; you have to make a conscious plan to learn about food at a very sophisticated level. He doesn't want that. He just wants, well, when you're hungry, you eat. You don't try to stimulate these desires. In fact, that's one of the problems with the Confucians—they are inventing various things. In fact, they invent desires as well. So the Daoist way would be, one imagines, almost a vegetative existence. That is, as the phrase goes, "*sheng yu si, si yu si*." We are born here and die here, very similar to a plant—get born, grow up, take nutrient, etc., and then die. Nobody is curious about anything. So even though *ji quan xiang wen*, even though villagers can hear the hen's cackle and the dog's bark in other villages, they're that close, they don't ever go over to visit. They just stay where they are. That would be, as far as I can see, the Daoist Utopia. That is the complete non-action: filling the stomach, emptying the mind and just going with the flow—interesting notion. And obviously it represents something very basic about the activities of the previous few centuries. I'll speak of that in a moment.

6.1.2 Social Economic Background of Daoism's Emergence

What had been going on in social economic terms in the time previous to the emergence of Daoism? You might call it economic development; you might call it higher and higher levels of functional specificity—more specialized roles economically and socially in society. The rise of cities for instance, because once these original enclaves become independent states, they start developing their own centers, they start cultivating their own gardens, and they start developing their own countries, as it

were. So those previous centuries represent a further intensification of the process of building a higher civilization. I think that Daoism might represent a general disgust at this process, the whole enterprise of higher civilization and the various phenomena that it produces: luxury-loving elites, greater exploitation of others and general destruction of the original social formation that existed in this process of, I guess you would call it, urbanization. And so to a certain extent that's why I think Daoism resembles very much some of more recent streams of thought, in fact, those that are essentially a critique of the same thing. In the West, we have a great variety of critiques of the Enlightenment project. That is, from the eighteenth century, when the Enlightenment started the processes of rationalization, of making things more efficient, it led to a negative reaction, which was expressed in various ways. Many of the features of Daoism these critiques share and they include of course the more recent ones, such as post-structuralism, post-modernism and so on.

6.1.3 *Daoism and the Chinese Arts*

I would add here that in the subsequent development of Chinese civilization, Daoism, which concerns itself with intuitive knowledge on a personal level, is often the area in which the arts are developed. The arts which call for personal expression, the arts including various types of painting or calligraphy or of course poetry, are often in conjunction with Daoist thought. The notions that follow in the later times, such as communicating with nature, are extremely important, necessary for cultivation of proper artistic sensibilities. The reason why Chinese gardens end up looking like miniature wild landscapes—miniature mountains, and shape of rocks and trees and waterways and so on—is precisely because it would afford the inhabitant of this garden to have the same benefits as going on into the wilds and communing with nature that way. It was usually in those settings that the poetry would be written, after perhaps getting tipsy, and wilder speculative conversation might be held. And of course other arts, such as calligraphy, are associated with this notion of individual intuitive knowledge of the cosmos and how it is linked to nature.

6.1.4 *The Zhuangzi*

The other classical work of Daoism is *The Zhuangzi* as I said. *The Zhuangzi* of course is very different. It is not written in poem-like statements. It is outright prose and in a way it makes arguments of a sort. It uses words in a clever way. It uses words primarily to upset all assumptions that human beings generally have. It is not just the critique of language, which of course it is as well; it is the critique of everything that people assume.

For instance, one of the more famous stories from *The Zhuangzi* is that Zhuangzi was sleeping, he had a dream, and then he woke up. He was dreaming that he

was a butterfly. He woke up and there he was, Zhuangzi. But then he reflected upon this experience and said, “Gee, how do I know that the dream was really real and that now I’m dreaming—I am really a butterfly and dreaming that I’m Zhuangzi?” In other words, the very assumption that you exist is questioned. The very assumption of consciousness reflecting something about the state of individual human is questioned. He goes beyond that to essentially show that everything is relative and that argument, even though he himself uses argument, words and ratiocinations are essentially useless. That is, nobody is ever persuaded by anything. Of course he tries to persuade people. That is the case with words, with arguments, with ratiocinations, I suppose you could say. But his point is that people are going to believe what they are going to believe for other reasons. It makes no difference. All of these arguments and words and doctrines and discussions and ratiocinations of various sorts are essentially useless. Arguments prove nothing, words prove nothing, and so it shares much of this critique of language and I suppose you could call it an epistemological critique as well.

These other fundamental notions are also a kind of turning everything on its heads. For instance, everybody fears death. His wife dies so his friend comes over to see him and Zhuangzi seems not being affected by his wife’s death. So his friend says, “My goodness, how can you act this way? Your wife has just died.” And so Zhuangzi replies, “Yeah, yeah, right after she died, I was very sad. But then I thought, how do I know that she is now not in a better state of existence than she was before?” He tells the story of a certain girl who was going to be taken as a concubine to the king, and of course she cried and cried because she was going to leave home. But then after she got to the palace and saw how splendid life was there and how enjoyable it was, then she wondered, “Why was I crying so much about this?” So Zhuangzi applies the same logic to the fear of death. How do we know that the state that we’re in after death isn’t far superior to the state that we’re in prior to death? There is no way of knowing.

In connection with this, there is an underlying moral relativism. That is, Zhuangzi doesn’t really have much to say about moral standards. He thinks that they are kind of irrelevant to things. He describes his situation or the human situation as this: basically, we are all alone out here; we can’t relate to anything except our immediate physical existence. It reminds one to certain extent, at least among Western thinkers, of Hobbes, who holds that the only thing we can relate to is our desire for pleasure and power. And Zhuangzi in the same way, although he never mentions power, mentions the notion of self-interest. But the point is that Hobbes describes—and in fact, Foucault follows him—the human situation as being: here I am, there are no standards out there, there is no meaning out there, I’m all alone, and the only thing that I can relate to is my immediate physical state. That is, I have desires for pleasure that I satisfy by doing various things: eating, having sex and whatever. Then I have this other urge to dominate others, or to control my environment to some degree. And that too is similar to Hobbes. So Zhuangzi is essentially saying the same thing that there is no true/false, that there is no bad/good, and that there’s only your immediate consciousness and your relation to your present physical state. All these other standards are irrelevant. There is no such thing as stupid. There is no such

thing as smart. There is no such thing as knowledge. The only absolute that you can find is within yourself. As I said, this reminds me very much of existentialism or by extension post-modernist notion about human existence.

6.1.5 *Daoist Philosophy Related to Daoism the Folk Religion?*

One of the common questions that people have immediately upon hearing about Daoism (on hearing about Zhuangzi and Laozi) is: What is the relationship between that sort of thing and what is called Daoism as a religion? In other words, Chinese folk religions sometimes go by the term “Daoist.” And this is of course a great mystery: why indeed is there any connection between philosophical Daoism and what we might call folk religious Daoism? It definitely has a connection because when religious Daoism emerges in the Han, Laozi is a deity in the usual folk religious thought. It of course incorporates an enormous number of elements. Then there are deities invented eventually. Over the centuries, it changes a good deal, but it still carries this name Daoism. So is there any connection at all? I am not sure. I think that in *The Zhuangzi* there is some discussion of nourishing one’s vital force (of preserving the natural forces or strengthening the natural forces within oneself). This has a connection I assume to the various regimens that started being invented very soon, certainly by the Han if not before, of life preservation, or of longevity, or indeed of eternal life. That is, various religious means by regimens, diets, exercises, meditations that are constructed for the general purpose of living long and healthy. Now Zhuangzi does mention similar exercises, and so one assumes that that is perhaps the only direct connection between the religious development and the original philosophical notions of classical Daoism.

6.2 Legalism

The third major way of classical Chinese thought is sometimes called Legalism because the Chinese term *Fajia* does indeed mention law. It could be interpreted in other ways from the substance of Legalist writings. I am referring to things like the Han Feizi’s, Lord Shang’s (Shang Yang) or Li Si’s writings, right? You’d have to say that they should be termed something like Realists rather than Legalists. They use law as an instrument to deal with reality, with practical matters. And they of course arise during this period of intensified competition between states. They too are interested in selling their doctrine to the rulers of the various competing states. It is in the end this doctrine that is adopted by the winning state—the state of Qin, which creates the first empire, the first unified centralized bureaucratized Chinese Empire.

However, because that first imperial dynasty the Qin was so short-lived—it hardly survived its founder, after that at least rhetorically Legalist thought or Realist thought cannot ever be mentioned again in any favorable light. That is, does that mean that it disappears, that the notions within Legalism disappear? No, because they are absolutely essential. They are the foundation of an empire. Without these notions, without these ways of thinking, you can't have a centralized bureaucratized empire.

As I said before, you can see within the oracle bones an adumbration of this kind of thought in that you have a kind of bureaucratic impulse already there in the Shang. And so the rise of this type of thought—Legalism/Realism is in a way nearly a further extension of the original notions that are part of the cultural matrix of the Shang, out of which of course these things then grow.

6.2.1 *Social Engineers*

One way of describing all of them is to call them social engineers. That is, their interest has nothing to do with morality and has nothing to do certainly with cosmology. It has nothing to do with anything except one project, one enterprise, and that is to make the state strong, to increase state power and to make the state more efficient. And so it is only logical I suppose that this doctrine would end up being the doctrine of the winning state.

Why? Because a bureaucracy is far more efficient than a feudal arrangement of lord and vassal for any purposes of mobilizing resources, that is, raising an army or raising taxes. It's far more efficiently done with a bureaucracy on the ground than a vassal, because the vassal is a lord in his area. That means he has his own power base there; that means that if I say "Show up on Tuesday with 500 bowmen," he might or he might not. He has some leverage against me as the ruler of the state because he's not completely dependent upon it—he has his own base, his own little kingdom, as it were. A bureaucrat, however, performs that function of "on Tuesday you show up with 500 bowmen" with far more respect because he has no local power basis. He doesn't really belong to that area. His position in that area in authority is totally dependent upon me, the ruler who appoints him. So this type of arrangement would naturally be superior to the old feudal arrangement of lord and vassal. It's just more efficient and so that's why later the Chinese Empire was possible, and that it could be of such an enormous size and still hold together. Otherwise, if that remained—a feudal empire with lords and vassals—then it would be continually breaking apart. To a certain extent, of course it always had centrifugal tendencies, but in the end it's a bureaucratic structure that can hold a large governing structure together, not one of feudal hierarchies.

So what do social engineers do? They utilize rewards and punishments (carrots and sticks) to make the population do what they want. It's a very modern notion. Modern states do this all the time. That is, it's therein the business of trying to shape the behavior of their citizens. They use the tax system—they use other types of law essentially—to perform the same function with the same means, that is, reward and

punishment. At the same time, these Legalists remind one of Machiavelli. In the West, this is the first political thinker who, like them, puts morality—questions of morality—completely aside and talks only about power; how to get it, how to keep it, and how to strengthen your state, strengthen your own power as the prince, the ruler, of that state. So these elements appeal to a modern reader as very reasonable, very reasonable indeed.

6.2.2 *Legalists' Critique of Confucian Thought*

Part of what you might call the Legalist critique of mainstream thought, that is to say, Confucian or *Ru* thought, was against the notion of a morally-determined elite, of the moral aristocrats running things and also of the generalist. Remember “*jun zi bu qi*”? The Legalists want to have one great big functioning machine with each cog in it working as efficiently as possible. So you don't want generalists; you only want specialists to operate in that system. So everybody is a *qi* and is an instrument in this system. So they attack notions of Confucian morality as well as the notions of the Confucian rulership as being based on superior moral achievements, as being through moral influence and as being conducted by generalists rather than specialists. So the Legalists will be perfectly happy to have everybody be a technocrat, everybody be an engineer in the governmental structure.

6.2.3 *Legalism and Rulership*

Now as I said, rhetorically Legalism disappears but its reality can't disappear. You have to have it, as I said, to have a centralized bureaucratic empire to exist at all. So it makes for a very interesting situation that the realities of the state—the way that the state operates—are very manifestly Legalist in nature, but the rhetoric of the state is completely Confucian in nature. So it can't be mentioned openly later as something Legalist precisely because it is a critique of the entire notion of a rulership based upon the superior moral attainments, the rulership of the best and brightest. Therefore, you cannot have rhetorically the notion that all moralizing is nonsense, which is indeed what the Legalists would have held. So there are still the mechanisms that they suggested. Sometimes the word *Fa* isn't used at all. Shen Buhai and other quasi-Legalist thinkers would use the term *Shu* or technique. It really means to a certain extent the same thing. It is inventing a bureaucratic structure based upon rewards and punishments for the overall goal of a greater state power and efficiency.

6.2.4 *Meritocracy*

Needless to say, Legalists have no interest in cosmology either. They are quite limited in their spheres of interest and in the end there is an overlap with the Confucian notions that manifest later. That is the notion of meritocracy. That is to say, there is as much a Legalist element in the gradual development of the civil service examination as there are Confucian elements because the Legalists, too, long for and favor a meritocracy; they want the bureaucrats to be the best at what they did—they want specialists, mind you. That’s where it differs from the Confucian notion. They do not want any powers out there in society that could essentially oppose the state. So they want an equal playing field that would make the most efficient way of running a state. You don’t want institutions out there that might interfere with your control of the population. So in the end, I think it’s a very interesting notion that the Chinese Empire based upon Legalism—Legalist devices, and Legalist notions—could never rhetorically mention Legalism.

6.3 Mozi

One of the many other thinkers that cannot be subsumed under the usual Confucian, Daoist or Legalist rubrics is Mozi. Mozi is an extremely interesting thinker. His book (i.e., *The Mozi*) looks as though that he might indeed have written it himself. It wasn’t notes by students or something.

6.3.1 *Mozi’s Central Ideas*

6.3.1.1 Utilitarian

If you want to give Mozi one label, it would have to be a Utilitarian. He was a utilitarian. And from that standpoint, he criticized Confucian notions of ceremony and the *Li* in general. He thought that ceremony in general, music particularly, was stupid, wasteful; it didn’t have any concrete benefits; it didn’t provide, as the standard utilitarian does, the greatest good for the greatest number. Mozi is alone in this stance that he takes.

6.3.1.2 Religious

The second unique aspect of Mozi is that he criticizes the Confucians also for not being sufficiently religious, that they do not honor the spirits the way they should. He is referring to, basically, the “old time religion” that I suppose is animism mixed with

other elements. Now he alone among all of thinkers of this period is actually what we would call in modern times a true religious thinker. He was a kind of revivalist for old time religion.

From the same standpoint, he attacked Confucian familialism. Remember I was talking about the moral bonds between ego and the rest of the world as being described by a series of concentric circles. Mozi thinks that gradations of that sort are very bad. You shouldn't, because somebody is your friend or your relative, be specially bound to him or her, or loyal to him or to her, or act for the benefits of him or her. He is in favor of what? He's in favor of "universal love." It's exactly the same with the notions of universal love that you find in Buddhism and in Christianity. And again he is alone among the thinkers of that period in that regard.

He's very serious about this religious notion, and to a certain extent again, very modern, and you might even say very Western in that the spirits are going to punish bad behavior. That is, they will punish evil and reward good in the same way that certainly in the Western tradition the spirits do. It's striking. It's so close to certain aspects of Western religions, monotheistic religions.

6.3.1.3 Statist

There's another aspect that might remind one of certain streams of Western thought and that is what you might call his "Statism." That is, he has almost a totalitarian view of the state. That is, you have a leader. The leader has of course a level of inferiors, who are going to identify completely with him, that is, take the leaders' standards as their own. And then below that level of followers, you have of course a further level of followers that are followers of or subordinates of the second level, and they too will do the same thing: they'll take the superiors' standards as their own (they'll identify with their superiors) so that in the end you have everyone thinking exactly the same way. Each will obey in the ironclad vertical command structure because of this. And it's similar to certain modern utilitarian notions of the state as well.

6.3.1.4 "You're in or you're out"

And there's another element that people usually don't mention, but his sense of organization is also very modern/Western. What I mean by that is he does indeed have a real honest-to-goodness "school" in the modern sense of it. That is, he has a community. He has a club. He has an organization that has very strict exclusive membership. Once you join, you don't join any other organizations or communities. "You're either in or you're out" is that binary logic that is completely absent in the other thinkers, especially of the Confucian variety and very uncharacteristic of early Chinese religious organizational forms. This kind of "you're in or you're out" is characteristic of ancient Western religious organizations but certainly not of the Chinese ones.

6.3.2 *Language Feature: Structured Arguments*

Even the language that the book (*The Mozi*) is written in is uncharacteristic of the other philosophers. He is perfectly logical, crystal clear. He makes structured arguments of the sort that you'd see in classical Greek philosophy. He is, in that respect, again quite uncharacteristic of the period.

6.4 Conclusion

So he has binary logic, he has a strict exclusivity applied to his religious organization and he has a notion of universal love. Now what happens to Mozi after this, say, by the end of the Han, is also I think quite significant. Essentially, he disappears and nobody pays any attention to Mozi any more. He doesn't really come up for much discussion until the end of the nineteenth century when he's resurrected to some degree.

Now why would that be? I'll give you my opinion. I think that the general flow (the mainstream) of Chinese civilization was antithetical to the directions in which Mozi was going. And so he was kind of dropped off. We do find traces of his ideas, as I think I mentioned in the earliest folk religious document that we have, that is, the *Taipingjing*, which is a sacred book of the Latter Han (third century A.D.). And then after that none of his notions ever seems to surface again. So this most modern and Western-like thinker is the one that drops off the map. There are a few other thinkers of the period whose writings are just fragmentary. And so you can't really consider them as disappearing because they really didn't have fully developed presence in the form of texts in the first place. In the case of Mozi though, we do have his very substantial text that might very well have been authored by him directly. That's the one that as I said disappears.

Chapter 7

Buddhism in China



We are now going to discuss the first and, in certain respects, the most significant of exterior/non-indigenous cultural influence in the development of Chinese civilization. That influence, of course, is Buddhism. Buddhism arrived gradually from perhaps the first century A.D. through to the seventh. By the end of this period, China was virtually a Buddhist country. That is to say, everyone in the entire population from the imperial court on down was, in one fashion or another, Buddhist.

This does not suggest, however, that the fundamental non-exclusive aspect of religious belief in China has changed. That is to say, there is an easily-made distinction between those basic criteria (those basic standards for civilized life, for human life), which in the West and in modern times we tend to call Confucian, and Buddhist; there was no exclusivity in allegiance to participation in any particular religious/spiritual community.

7.1 Widespread of Buddhism

Why did Buddhism succeed at this time? It spread relatively rapidly given the nature of communication at the time. Why did it spread so quickly? It's very interesting. To a certain extent, it is simultaneous with the rise of Christianity at the other end of the Eurasian continent. That is to say, in Western Europe, it was around this time that Christianity became the dominant religion of all of old Mediterranean civilizational areas, and then eventually of Northern Europe and Eastern Europe. To a certain extent, one of the reasons why Buddhism spread so rapidly is identical with one of the reasons why Christianity spread so rapidly.

It was around the fourth century that the Roman Empire was coming apart. There was enormous disorder. The world as people knew it seemed to be coming to an end. That is, the old standard eternal verities were no longer so standard or so eternal. It is the nature of otherworldly religions to provide a refuge, to provide a safe haven spiritually for human beings in such times of trouble.

In the Chinese end of the Eurasian Continent, we have a similar phenomenon. That's when the Han Dynasty, the Latter Han, was coming apart, and that's when the eternal verities were no longer looking so eternal. That's when there was enormous instability and in the same way, the comforts of an otherworldly religion such as Buddhism were more apt to be welcomed by the population as a whole. This is not to say, however, the spread of Buddhism is from the bottom up. It is, as in many cases, a process whereby the top accepts such and such a practice or whatever, and then it descends into the lower ranks of society.

In fact, the second reason why it spread so rapidly is that the elite intellectuals, you might say, saw in it a very interesting, absorbing intellectual construct, that is, room for speculative thought. What is the mainstream of the Chinese thought after all? It focuses on this world, this life, the affairs of government, the affairs of society, not any other sphere or realm of human activity or thought. It focuses on the here and now. There is no room, aside from the Daoism, for free-ranging speculative thought. So Buddhism, to a certain extent, provided this and therefore was welcomed by the elite classes.

Thirdly, one of these types of elite classes was the barbarian dynasties of the North that come after the Han and the Three Kingdoms Period. Many of the rulers of these newly-founded kingdoms took on Buddhism as a kind of state religion. They themselves adopted it in a very enthusiastic way. And therefore, their populations adopt it. These are three reasons why Buddhism spread so rapidly during this particular period of Chinese history.

7.2 The Origin of Buddhism

Now what is Buddhism? Where did it come from? I think that story for the most part is relatively well known everywhere. That is to say, there was a Nepalese prince in Northeastern India—Gautama Sakyamuni—who was born with everything. He was an aristocrat. His entire life was full of great privilege. He could in essence have anything that he wanted. And it's precisely someone in that situation who would be thinking along the lines that the Buddha did. That is to say, since I have everything, then why am I not happy? Why am I not every day dancing a dance of delight? Why is it that I still feel in some fashion empty or unfulfilled or unconnected? He thought about this and he came up with various answers.

The first would be that life is hell; life is one damn bad thing after another; life is suffering; life is a rack of pain of one sort or another for a human being. So he observes that especially among the masses of people life looks exactly like that. It's one unpleasant experience after another punctuated by nanoseconds or seconds of joy or delight or satisfaction. These moments of joy and satisfaction are when a certain desire is fulfilled. That is to say, the ratio between the existence of annoying desire or yearning and the time of satisfaction for those desires or yearnings is very much out of kilter. It might be five years versus one minute. That is to say, the time in which satisfaction of desires is successful is very, very limited, and so he thinks

that the first problem is desire. That is, you get rid of desire—yes, you might get rid of those nanoseconds of joy, but you would also get rid of the pain of the five years of unfulfilled desire, unfulfilled yearning.

Of course underlying this, he eventually concluded, was an even more profound misunderstanding about human life than most people have. That is, we call it in Chinese the “two holdings” (*liangzhi*), meaning those two assumptions about things that no one ever questions but that are in fact errors. The first of these errors of course is the assumption that ego exists at all. That is to say, what constitutes a self at any point of time is merely a momentary conglomeration of elements that very quickly change, disperse, and have other elements enter into it. So it’s, on the one hand, very difficult to say that any one self has any continuity at all, and on the other hand, that temporary conglomeration/composite of elements exists at all. The second error that is an assumption for humankind is that the world “out there” exists, and that what ego receives through sensations is something that exists objectively out there. In fact, it’s all a passing show; it is all smoke and shadow; it is all a transitory thing. There is nothing permanent; there is nothing out there and there’s nothing in here. These are the two fundamental mistakes that humankind tends to assume from the outside.

So what do you do about the situation? You become “enlightened.” You truly understand that there is no ego, that there is no world, and that it’s all a passing show with no substance. Once you truly understand that, then you are enlightened, you are liberated, you are free from the rack of pain, that is, life, and you are free from the suffering that comes from the holding onto, the adherence to, these two basic errors.

How do you get to that state of enlightenment? There are several methods, one of which is what we usually call mortification of the flesh, that is, kill desires, squash desires, remove desires of any sort. This is done by certain regimens: limitations on food and drink, limitations on sex and limitations on the physical comfort of various sorts. And so you practice these regimens and they help you get toward enlightenment.

Another method, of course the one that the Buddha himself practiced, is meditation. That is to remove oneself from the external stimuli that one perceives in the world and concentrate upon the true reality behind this passing show. That would be another method to gain enlightenment. Enlightenment is of course the equivalent of the Western concept of salvation.

Now we have described the Buddha as the original person who said, “Life is a bitch, and then you die.” This is an Americanism that means something like “*shenghuo hen xinku, zuihou ni buguo shi si diao eryi*.” So not only do you have to suffer through life, but then you die at the end. Even that ends, in the case of the Buddha, however, because he developed in a very different cultural matrix, that is, ancient Hinduism, you don’t get away that easily. That is to say, you don’t die—you might physically die—but you will come back. You don’t get away with it by just suffering through life and then die to escape the pain; you will experience the pain again in your next life. This is of course the assumption about transmigration of souls. So you don’t really gain true salvation simply by becoming Enlightened. You have to fly off that wheel into nothingness, into Nirvana; you have to eventually through Enlightenment leave

this Eternal Wheel of Life and go into nothing. That would constitute true salvation in the Buddhist concept of the word.

So again how do you get there? It's through the same disciplines of achieving Enlightenment of course. When this kind of idea reached China, as you can imagine, because there were so many points of diametrical opposition to mainstream Chinese culture, the message did not remain intact. I mean, at the very beginning, you can see that this type of religion simply wouldn't work for the masses of the people. It was born among the aristocracy and it is essentially a kind of aristocratic religion. That is to say, if you take the Buddhist message literally, then all you would do is to mortify your flesh and meditate. Now if that is the case, then how is society to exist at all? How would society be supported at all? Of course there's no way. If everyone were mortifying their flesh and meditating, society would cease to exist.

In the case of China, of course, there is even more a contrast as the old saying goes—I think from *The Mencius*—"bu xiao you san, wu hou wei da," and that means of course there are three kinds of unfilial behavior, but the very worst is not having progeny. In the major enterprise in mainstream Chinese civilization are these processes whereby you fulfill moral obligations. And one of the most basic, the fundamental of all these moral obligations is to continue the family into the indefinite period of the future. And the family comes from the indefinite time in the past, and you must continue that—that is a primary moral duty. So how does this then square with Buddhism? How could Buddhism possibly have been a widespread belief system in China's particular cultural matrix?

7.3 Mahayana

7.3.1 What Is Mahayana?

To answer that question, we have to see in the concrete detail what happened when the Buddhist doctrine went basically through the Taklamakan Desert from oasis town to oasis town and reached North China. It arrived, and of course the first thing you have to do was to make it comprehensible to the Chinese in the Chinese language. As I said, at the beginning, there were many Daoism terms that were used for translation because it looked as though the real reality behind these illusionary screens was similar to Daoism. The idea of continuous change—the transitory nature of everything—was also very Daoist. So at the beginning, certain terms would be rendered into Daoist terms. Of course there were so many that could not be—there was no even close Daoist equivalent, so that transliteration would also be used as a device with proper names, Sakyamuni becoming *Shijiamouni* and so on. So, that was the first step—the linguistic adoption of these strange doctrines into the Chinese language; there are other aspects of this adaptation.

Chinese civilization tends to be more reserved in expression of various emotions such as affection and tends to be a bit more puritanical as well so that other less

obvious changes took place. Buddhist sculpture was essentially influenced by Greek sculpture because Alexander's conquests reached as far as India in certain techniques so that in the Indian version of the sculpture you see quite a bit of the body. When the Chinese version took form though, the body was more or less covered up. Descriptions of kissing and embracing and so on in various sutras also tended to be excised as part of this process. But even given this first step in the Sinicization of Buddhism, you still have to make such an unacceptable doctrine acceptable to the people, who are acculturated into Chinese ways, as I said, quite diametrically opposed in most areas to Buddhist fundamentals.

What emerged is a fully-Sinicized version of Buddhism called Mahayana. Mahayana means the Greater Vehicle. The Greater Vehicle you might render it in English as "Buddhism for the Rest of Us" or "Buddhism for the Masses." That's essentially what it is. It is a popularized form whereby you do not have to go the whole hog in your ascetic practices, in your mortification of the flesh. You can still live a normal life, having children and so on. You just observe certain limitations in these matters, and you do certain other things that do not directly interfere with your normal life as a civilized human being. So that is the essence of what Mahayana consists of. The more original Buddhist message is termed by the Mahayana Buddhists as Hinayana, the Lesser Vehicle. But Lesser Vehicle people themselves prefer Theravada as the term, which doesn't put them in a kind of inferior position as being a lesser something or another.

7.3.2 *Emergence of Bodhisattva*

Perhaps the most important aspect of Mahayana Buddhism is that the fundamental message is changed to include certain other means whereby one gains salvation. For instance, the most obvious one in this Mahayana Buddhism is the emergence of a Bodhisattva, a *Pusa* in Chinese. Now what is that? That is what we would call in the West something like a Buddhist saint. It is someone who has reached enlightenment, who is on the cusp of going into nothingness, who has achieved the state whereby he or she may fly off that Wheel of Transmigration into nothingness. But because of another aspect of Buddhism—the universal demand for compassion for other sentient beings—this enlightened person does not selfishly go into nothingness. In fact, he or she does precisely the opposite. He or she returns to help other sentient beings achieve enlightenment. And therefore, you can call upon or petition, Bodhisattvas for various things, including help in achieving enlightenment, and as is inevitable in all religions, help in this world in various kinds of ways. So that is of course an important change.

7.3.3 *Emergence of Clergy*

The second change is that there's now a clergy, a highly developed clergy of monks and nuns and abbeys and so on. These professional religionists can also be utilized by having them do funerals and so on, having them in essence help you or your relatives to achieve salvation in the Buddhist sense. These are quite different features from the original message, which called for all of the efforts to be done by oneself. In this other version, you have aids external to the self, such as Bodhisattvas or professional clergy.

What essentially is going on with these aids is that the individual is building up merit, which will help in the next life, in the next go-round. That is to say, I am religious in this life, I am devoted to various Buddhist practices, to various Bodhisattvas, and I do a lot of what might be considered charitable activities—all of this increases my merit, and so my merit will affect my next life until eventually of course you reach the point whereby you also achieve Nirvana.

This process of building up merit has a very interesting effect. That is, for the first time ungraded altruism is manifestly an element in Chinese civilization. That is to say, a good act, an act for another sentient being of any sort, and that would include charity such as orphanages or even putting a water station out on the roads so that travelers might drink. This is Good Works as we would say in the Christian tradition. These are Good Works that will eventually redound to the merit of the practitioner of them. And in this there is no Confucian element of gradational moral obligations. That is to say, you do these things for what would be considered strangers. They are not one of those concentric circles that surround ego, there is no one that you have any moral obligations to, but you do these Good Works for them because they are other similarly suffering sentient beings. So the virtue of compassion in Buddhism does have a very strong effect in changing certain aspects of social practices in China.

7.3.4 *Schools of Mahayana*

Once established in China, Buddhism in the form of Mahayana Buddhism developed almost innumerable schools and sects, you might say. The more important ones, Tiantai, Jingtu, Weishi and others, would be fundamentally the same message, but they take off in different directions and emphasize certain other aspects. One, for instance, is related to Chan (Chanzong) and emphasizes what you might call the epistemological aspects of Buddhism to explain what the sensations mean, and how you actually know the world.

Jingtu, the Pure Land, would of course be an example of another extreme and that is what we would call in the West something like salvation through faith. That is, if you call upon the Amida Buddha (just expressing your faith and literally calling out his name), you can achieve salvation that way. Their practices at least used to exist by someone in the temple simply chanting the name and of course hitting the

wooden fish. Weishi is extremely intellectual, while this of course is not intellectual at all.

As with all religions, changes take place at the popular level. That is to say, there are now levels of Buddhist hells complete with images of demons with pitchforks, frying people and so on, as well as levels of Buddhist heavens. So although there is obvious contradiction between the idea of going out of existence and entirely into nothingness and the other kind of salvation of going into a level of heaven, of paradise, it made no difference. There were still these popular forms that developed notions of the afterlife that would be in direct contradiction to the original idea of achieving ultimate salvation by going out of existence. These popular practices and beliefs are for the most part going to become stronger and stronger as time goes on, as certain eclectic images, practices and beliefs would form a synthesis with other belief elements. Especially by the time you get to the 11th/12th/13th centuries, this was the case.

There's a fundamental divide between all of these schools, and that is the approach to reaching Enlightenment. One is what could be called the gradual approach: through time you study, meditate and eventually achieve Enlightenment. Then there's the immediate, intuitive pass to Enlightenment, which is associated with the Zen as we say in Japanese, which is Chinese Chanzong. Because Zen, the Japanese version of Chan, reached the West first, to this day in English if someone wants to refer to that tradition in Buddhism, they would use the Japanese pronunciation of the same character in Chinese. And of course all of this comes from China. That is, the Buddhism of Korea and Japan and Vietnam and so on is originally the Mahayana Buddhism that was developed in China. Ironically, as I said in the West we tend to call this tradition of sudden Enlightenment Zen rather than Chan.

So what does that involve? It is an intuitive awakening, non-verbal, very similar to the Daoist tradition of the critique of inadequacy of language, of language just not being able to convey certain things. There is a difference from the Platonic understanding and something like German *Verstehen*. That is, you truly understand, you *tihui* it. You don't achieve that by intellectual activity. You achieve it by an entire, complete experience that involves all aspects—especially not by the intellect, but more intuition and other aspects of a kind of what we would call visceral understanding. So in the Chan School we have these Chan Masters who know what's what, who have achieved sudden Enlightenment, who would convey the message in non-verbal ways. Part of the message is precisely the medium which is non-verbal. In many respects, it looks on the surface like craziness. So this series of questions by students and answers by the Masters, in Japanese again which is *koan*, which is *Gong'an* in Chinese, is the records of sorts of exchange between teachers and students. On the surfaces as I said, sometimes they don't make any sense. A student may ask, "Oh, Master, the state of my soul is turbulent; my mind, my *xin* is cloudy." And very often, inevitably the Zen Master would say, "Oh, yeah? Well, we are all out here. I'll fix it for you." What sense does that make?

Or the Zen Master might ask the student, "Well, do you like noodles?"

"Oh, yes, I do." Slap.

"Oh, eh, I understand."

Or, “Do you like noodles?”.

“No, I don’t like noodles.” Slap. It makes no difference.

That kind of realization that it makes no difference is the kind of an immediate awakening to certain aspects of existence that are not achievable through verbal instruction, and that can only be achieved through these more immediate, intuitive ways of communication. It is not surprisingly the Chan or Zen schools of Buddhism that are most favored by and most associated with artistic endeavor. In the same way, prior to Buddhism, it was the Daoist tradition that became associated with individual creativity, with individual expression of emotion. So too, there is a Zen tradition that expresses itself in painting and poetry and the other arts.

7.4 The Attack on Buddhism

So, as I have said, this did very well in China so that in Tang times you can talk about the entire society from top to bottom as being piously Buddhist. In the ninth century, there was an attack by the state on the Buddhist institution, that is, not of the doctrine or anything to do with the substance of Buddhist beliefs, but upon the institutions. By that time, the Buddhist church, a highly articulated organization, owned enormous amounts of land and wealth. That is, monasteries would have vast tracks of land to support them.

I would like to point out that in foreign historiography very often this event of state dismantling of the Buddhist church is called a “religious persecution.” Actually, it couldn’t have been a religious persecution, first of all, because even though there was certainly by the Han times what you might call a state religion—*guojiao*—throughout the imperial period that didn’t mean that the state called upon everyone in the empire to participate in any one religious belief. There still was no exclusivity of religious adherence. That is, you could participate in several simultaneously and the state would not do much about it. In fact, there was of course no way that the state could. However, the Western, the European experience was so different that there were actual wars, long wars. In Europe, over religious doctrine, that is, the substance of doctrine, people were killing each other.

In the Chinese case of the so-called religious persecution, the Emperor Wuzong in 845 A.D. decided: it’s time to take the Buddhist church down a bit. At that time, it’s essentially a political persecution. That is, the Buddhist church became so powerful and wealthy that it constituted a threat to the state. The substance of Buddhist beliefs or practices had nothing to do with this suppression. It had nothing to do with it at all. One would have to think that even the officials, the soldiers, the court itself, when this suppression or persecution was going on, were still probably pious Buddhists. That is, the adherent to Buddhist things did not disappear just because the state decided to dismantle the Buddhist church. It was, as I said, primarily a political matter, erroneously known outside China as a religious matter.

7.5 The Analectic Nature of Chinese Thought

So after these ninth-century measures that the state takes against the Buddhist church, there is an acceleration of what is essentially a natural process, whereby religious belief becomes popularized. And because of this element—you might call it an urge within Chinese civilization toward eclecticism, toward synthesis, as I said, related to the original cosmology that you find assumed among the classical philosophers and of course articulated in certain respects by the *Book of Changes*, because there is no Aristotelian law of identity in operation, there is a natural process whereby what might be considered antithetical or incompatible elements are brought together in some way.

I gave the example of the first national doctrine (the *guojiao*) of the Han. That was a creation of Dong Zhongshu, in which you find all kinds of elements: the Yin and Yang, the Five Elements (*Wuxing*) as well as certain aspects of what preceded it as a popular religion of sorts called Huanglao. We don't exactly know what Huanglao consisted of, but it must have had some kind of what we have to call Daoist elements in it. So Dong Zhongshu was a great synthesizer and that is typical of what went on. I mentioned the *Taipingjing*, which is again an eclectic mixture of many different elements that we might call Confucian, Daoist, Legalist and even in that case Moist; that is, Mozi gets into the act as well.

To a certain extent, Buddhism itself in the Chinese form, in the Mahayana form, is an analectic mixture of certain aspects of neo-Daoism, even to a certain extent, elements of Confucianism. This urge, in my opinion, was not at all limited to the higher philosophical levels of Dong Zhongshu and whoever. It continued on the popular level as well, so that by the 11th/12th century, you had as a folk religion, an eclecticism mixture of Buddhist elements, of what would have to be called religious Daoist elements, and of course mainstream Confucian elements.

I often think of the folk religion as a kind of ameba. That is, the shape that ameba would take at any particular time would be different; the shape of the ameba is continually changing. That is, there is a continuous process of absorption of elements and export of elements so that it is impossible to say that there was any particular folk religion in existence empire-wide. There are always local practices that are a little bit different from the practices of other locales.

What I'm describing as an eclectic urge is of course manifested in fundamental ways by the empire itself, which is a synthetic or eclectic mixture of what we are calling Confucian elements and Legalist elements. Occasionally of course, the Daoism elements would be put into the rhetoric as well. But the point is that even the imperial state is a synthesis of several elements that on the surface could be considered incompatible.

And so to conclude this section on the development of Chinese thought in Chinese civilization, I would point out that there is a certain congruity to it starting with the Shang in Shang religious thought. And then what follows of course is the cosmological vision that is in the *Book of Changes*. Certain qualities of those two traditions are maintained throughout, above all, this assumption that any two things that are

already judged to be good and true are in some fashion compatible because of the absence of the Aristotelian law of identity. Naturally that is because of the concepts of universe as one great inter-penetrating interdependent organic whole. So from that original cosmological vision comes certain features of Chinese thought that are more or less permanent throughout the following period of millennia.

Chapter 8

Recurrent Themes in Chinese Civilization



We are now going to address the question of imperial history as a whole. That is to say, from the Qin-Han onto the early twentieth century, Chinese civilization had certain recurrent themes that we should address. We are not going to, as it is often in practice, address one dynasty after another and include certain features of that particular dynasty. We are attempting a grand synthesis, an overall statement about the two millennia of history. And so naturally what I have to say here is going to be somewhat general. There will be general features that are significantly different in each period of time. However, overall and certainly from a foreigner's standpoint, these are elements that stand out as being features of continuity of Chinese civilization through millennia.

There are eight of them that I will speak of, the first of which is the Mandate of Heaven. This of course is related to several other recurrent themes: the dynastic cycle, the concept of and the action of popular rebellion, barbarians and the emperor's overall role in the Sinic universe (i.e., what positions and what functions he had). Following that and related to it would be the system of tribute states. In society itself of course the single most important institution is the family. We will discuss Chinese familism and then finally discuss the position of women overall during this period.

8.1 Mandate of Heaven

Now what is the Mandate of Heaven? This is a relatively well-known doctrine and feature of Chinese civilization. Its *locus classicus* of course is in the *Book of History*, the *Shujing*. It is essentially a rationale for the overthrow of government.

8.1.1 *Development of the Concept of Tian*

Let's consider the Shang first. They are the ones that are going to be overthrown by the Zhou people who come from the Northwest. And very often it is the case in the Chinese history that the conquerors come from the Northwest, as in the case of the Tang, and of course of the Qin and the Zhou. So the Shang were essentially heads of what must have been something like a confederation of tribes. They held their position as the supreme ruler. The king of Shang was regarded as supreme because of his ancestors. He had powerful ancestors. He had, as chief priest of the world, direct connection to the other world that was better than anyone else's. He was legitimized by this connection.

Shang civilization itself always seems to me a domination by inclusion. That is, it might have very well been a confederation of tribes, each of which had a totem (i.e., an eagle or a fish or a snake). All societies at first—all formations of that sort—start off having a totem. Now I think of the dragon, or indeed *taoties* that appear on the Shang bronze vessels as well as elsewhere. They are like the dragon—composites; at least they would appear to be composites of many animals. That is to say, a dragon is certainly a combination of a great many different animals. It's obviously along the lines of the snake because it's elongated, but its head looks very lion-like, its face looks chicken-like, and its skin certainly appears to be somewhat characteristic of other animals. I often think along with the *taotie* images that these are composites, mixtures of the totems of many groups. And so, "*nimen de shi ge ji a, mei guanxi, ni guolai ba.*" It makes no difference that your totem is a chicken. That's fine. We'll incorporate you.

The final criterion for legitimacy over the rulership of these various tribes is as I said the connection that the Shang king had. Almost as a spiritual entity, he was able to contact forces in whatever beyond but other such heads of tribes or confederations could not. Anyway that's my speculative interpretation of the phenomenon.

So along come the Zhou people. How are they going to justify their overthrow of the Shang king, who after all is in that position because he has connection with the beyond? Enters the new supreme deity of the Zhou, which is Tian (that's Heaven). The old supreme deity of the Shang is Shangdi, a very different kind of entity. Nobody knows exactly what it refers to, possibly the collective ancestors of the Shang. Heaven, however, is very different. Heaven is almost an impersonal entity representing the cosmos or the principles of the cosmos as a whole. Heaven is also anthropomorphic, quasi-anthropomorphic at least, as Heaven appears in *The Analects* and other classical works. It seems to be able to **will** things. So the Zhou essentially have the justification that it's not as though we want to overthrow the Shang, it is that Tian who has a moral sense, has will and does so. We ourselves of course can only act upon Heaven's will. And so forever after whenever there is a dissident political force, its motto is to "*ti tian xing dao*," to carry out the Dao for Heaven—"Heaven made us do it. I'm afraid that we have no choice but to overthrow you because of that." So essentially the Zhou say that Heaven finds the Shang kings to be moral degenerates;

they are simply not virtuous enough to qualify as ruler of *Tianxia*, to have the same moral and political supremacy that Tian (Heaven) calls for. And Heaven will not be served by morally inferior person; Heaven will be served only by the most virtuous.

8.1.2 *Tian and Mandate of Heaven*

Why is that? Because Heaven itself has a moral sense. I contrasted this previously with the Daoist vision of the world where “old-man Dao” is completely indifferent to the affairs of human beings. “Old-man Dao” just keeps rolling along and has no will at all. It just acts spontaneously. The figure of Tian, however, is something, as I said, quasi-anthropomorphic and does “will” things. Heaven has a moral sense. Heaven is always on the side of the virtuous. Heaven is always on the side of the good guys, the morally superior people.

And that underlies the concept of Mandate of Heaven. There are within the Mandate of Heaven other elements that could be interpreted in a different way. For instance, why did the Zhou people succeed in overthrowing the Shang people and establishing their own state? Or the later manifestation, why did Han Gaozu emerge as supreme and succeed in establishing his own state? In both cases, of course the answer at a certain level is that Heaven made them succeed; Heaven willed that they would succeed because they were more moral. On the other hand, the argument would tend to be circular very soon. Why did they win? Because Heaven willed it. How do you know that Heaven willed it? Because they won. In a way, a circular argument.

8.1.3 *The Will of Heaven and the Will of the Masses*

Along with this notion that Heaven is on the side of the good guys, there is another notion equally important that Heaven is on the side of the masses of human beings. This means that the nature of the kingship is quite different from that of European kings, especially after the development of the divine right of kings, or even the Japanese king, that is, another Son of Heaven. The Japanese king is descended biologically from the gods. And therefore, the Japanese king can never be overthrown. In theory, European kings could never be overthrown. The Chinese king, however, is holding that position conditionally, conditional upon the will of Heaven. That is, dependent upon the level of virtue that the king has achieved and dependent upon how well the king performs as benefits the people in general.

There is another element to this as I said that could be called a kind of populism, that is, “*tianshi zi wo minshi, tianting zi wo minting*,” which means “Heaven (the cosmos) sees as the masses of the people see, and Heaven hears as the masses of the people hear.” In other words, the masses of people are in a way the way that Heaven sees the world. Their views are Heaven’s views.

This is of course necessary because if the Mandate of Heaven is the expression of the will of Heaven, then, the party that emerges supreme is the party with most people on their side. So in other words, in the same way that Mencius will later argue it, the people will be attracted to the best ruler, the most virtuous ruler, and therefore will follow them and it is that ruler or the elite who will emerge victorious. One of the aspects that we'll talk about later about the Chinese kingship is that it's not only conditional upon the will of Heaven, but it's also requiring the king to be continuously cultivating his virtue.

There is something about virtue that we already alluded to. It has almost magical efficacy. It radiates outward. The *Junzi*, the Morally Superior Person, is going to rule by virtue of his virtue, by the force of his virtue. And the king or the emperor is essentially in the same position, only of course the scale is much larger. Without that powerful virtue that radiates outward, the king cannot continue to rule. Much of the rhetoric that you see in those two millennia is an expression of this. When something goes wrong, very often he's going to say, "My virtue is simply inadequate."

8.2 Dynastic Cycle

The second theme that runs through the two millennia or so of imperial history is the dynastic cycle. Now this term refers to two different things. One is the interior part of consciousness, and the other is exterior, having to do with the objective facts on the ground out there.

8.2.1 *Interior Aspect*

The interior aspect is that time is conceived of as a cycle—not quite circular, but still cyclic in nature. This is true throughout these two millennia. It is in the nature of things that there will be a cycle. A very popular novel in late imperial times called the *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* (*Sanguo yanyi*) begins with a statement “*fenjiujihe, hejiujifen*.” That is, “after a period of disunity, there will be naturally a period of unity again, and after a period of the opposite, there will be a period of the opposite.” So this is just taken for granted that the world operates on a, I would say, quasi-cyclic schedule. It certainly is quite different from the modern concept of linear time that only goes forward with no returns. That's the interior way of looking at the dynastic cycle concept.

8.2.2 *Exterior Aspect*

The exterior has to do with the way that dynasties rise and fall. The illustration is very abstract, but for our purposes, an accurate enough representation of the rise and fall of dynasties. It is this line that peaks and then declines, peaks and then declines. That would represent a particular government's, a dynasty's rise and fall in the abstract. It has a basis in demography and economics and certain sociological factors.

For instance, at the beginning of a dynasty, the populations have been depleted because of the period of chaos, and the economic dysfunction that preceded it. So when a dynasty begins, then the man/land ratio (i.e., the ratio of how much land there is for the population as a whole) is very good. There's more land than previously for people because the population has declined so much. A lot of people died. A lot of people weren't born during the period of chaos that preceded the founding of a dynasty.

At the beginning, the dynasty is more vigorous. That is to say, they have the group of people who have achieved great success. They are all people of action. They know the world. They know how it operates. They've succeeded primarily through military means in rising to found their dynasty through knowledge of the way that the world works. They are very efficient. They are very effective actors. So the first emperors of any dynasty tend to be the best. They are the most conversant of reality outside the palace.

As time goes on, of course, the various heirs of the emperor will be raised in a completely isolated environment surrounded by women and eunuchs and will have less and less knowledge/experience of the outside world in how it operates. So that's another factor. The nature of rulers, the nature of the king, will change over time.

Thirdly, the bureaucracy, the officials, the officialdom, will change through time as well. They, too, will have a lower morale. They will be less efficient over time. This happens to all organizations apparently. They reach a point of maturation and then almost naturally become less efficient.

Now why is this occurring, aside from natural tendencies that existed? It's because in fact the man/land ratio is changing dramatically. When times are good at the beginning of a dynasty, simply more people get born. You have population growth. That means that there's less and less land, that is, the primary means of production, available to any single family. So overall, you might say that there's a point of saturation that is going to be reached and then everyone will essentially get poorer. And that's certainly a factor, so that the decline of a dynasty after its height is conditioned by the process whereby, because of usual factors, everyone is getting poorer. That means that officials will be sharper in their exactions from society. It means that they will not increase their efficiency but they will in fact lower their efficiency. It means then that the state cannot respond as effectively to various emergencies: natural disasters or military threats. So the dynasty, the machinery of the dynasty, is simply not going to work as well. And everyone, as I said, is getting poorer in that period. That means that there will be more unattached single males especially who have no vested interest in things, who will be available for such activities as rebellion.

8.3 Popular Rebellion

The third recurrent theme is that of popular rebellion. That is the way that the dynastic cycle operates. That is the way that the Mandate of Heaven operates. It is expressed through the masses of people. That's essentially what a popular rebellion, a dynastic rebellion is—it is the expression of the masses of people. Within the dominant views of the elite is the notion that indeed it's the masses of people who will determine the Mandate of Heaven. As I said, Heaven sees as the people see, Heaven hears as the people hear. It was partially because of that, as I mentioned before, the Chinese empires were more service-oriented than their contemporaneous empires were.

Now two points I would like to make about this process of popular rebellion. First, it's always called in most history books a rural rebellion, or a peasant rebellion, or a peasant war. I think that's true enough because after all the great bulk of the population was made up of rural people. That's the only way that you can have a popular anything—by including most of the people. That's where the people were. So all popular mass actions had to be primarily rural in nature.

A second point is that the possibilities of these rebellions were always there. They were probably popping up all the time, but it was in the interests of local officialdom not to report them upward because the general peace and security of an official's jurisdiction was essentially a moral responsibility of his. If something untoward happens, it's somehow ascribed to his lack of virtue.

There are two other aspects that I would like to bring up about the nature of these popular uprisings/rebellions. As I said, there were probably innumerable ones that existed, popped up but were immediately suppressed by society itself or by the state. And then there were those which did get into the historical record. We all know about those that were not able to be contained, and therefore reached a certain size, so that they had to be reported, and that in turn meant that they got into the historical record.

So what goes on there I think is similar to what happens with a snowball. You have a snowball—that's a small organized rebellion or dissident group. Conditions economic and other have to be right for that snowball to gather snow as it rolls. That is to say, in the case of a physical snowball, climatic conditions have to be right so that when the snowball rolls, it will pick up more snow. In other words, this movement or organization will pick up more adherents.

The second aspect is that once it reaches a certain size, then you have what I would call in colloquial English the “bandwagon effect.” That is to say, other people who see that this might be going somewhere, this movement or this organization might actually have a future, would join. Once the Taiping started going, you have a bandwagon effect whereby local triad (so-called secret society organizations) appeared and wanted to participate.

So these two images, one of a snowball, the other of a bandwagon—everyone wants to jump on it—are in a way quite crucial to which of these popular rebellions get into the historical record and which don't.

8.4 Barbarians

Another recurrent theme in those two millennia is the theme of barbarians. It is partly in contrast to that nomadic civilization of the North against which the Chinese civilization of the South defines itself. There are barbarian dynasties as well. That is, when one of these explosions took place from Inner Asia, North China especially would be liable to the creation of various Chinese-style dynasties (Chinese-style states) by some Northern people or another.

8.4.1 *Acculturation*

The first time that this happened in any great quantity was after the Han-Three-Kingdoms period, whereby several states were formed in North China by northern peoples. Now in that case, these northern peoples, to a certain extent, disappear. They become Chinese, and whatever they were at the beginning, they no longer are later. This is to a certain extent an old cliché of China absorbing her conquerors and so on. And to a certain extent, it is true so that you could have acceptance of—we don't have the concept of race at that time—a racially different person as the Son of Heaven. That person, if other requirements are met, could still be accepted as the Son of Heaven; and indeed, that's what happens.

But there is a Catch-22 to this. That is to say, it's the contradiction of self-preservation. On the one hand, in order for self-preservation to occur, in order to rule China, in order to survive in China, you adopt local culture. The old cliché again is that you can conquer the empire on horseback, but you cannot rule it from horseback. You have to become Chinese culturally to rule Chinese. And so to a certain extent, that calls for absorption of Chinese culture, for essentially being culturally Chinese. On the other hand, if the self in self-preservation is lost as it usually is, then what was originally going to be preserved, the self, the cultural identity of the original entity is lost. These are lessons that were repeated over and over again that the northern barbarian dynasties very soon became completely Chinese with exceptions that I will mention.

Now what is the general attitude toward barbarians not just as Sons of Heaven or as rulers, but as people in general? As I said, there was no available concept of race existing at the time. What there was, however, is a cultural distinction. That is, anyone can become a human being, that is, Chinese, simply by acculturation, by *tonghua*, by becoming Chinese culturally. And that is what you might call the "soft" way of looking at barbarians that arose. It's the mainstream of attitudes toward barbarians for those two thousand some years. That is, barbarians can become human beings very easily. All they have to do is to become culturally so.

A concrete and very interesting example would be the early Jesuit missionaries who were clearly unlike other northern peoples that we were just discussing. For instance, they were clearly very different looking physically. That is to say, they

had much more facial hair. They had higher noses. Originally, they dressed in a very different fashion of course. Their native language certainly wasn't Chinese. However, they soon became perfectly accepted. They became employed at court as officials essentially. They did that by becoming, at least to a large extent, culturally Chinese. They could operate in the Chinese language. They could read and write. They had respect for the Five Relationships and other core values of Chinese ethics. And, therefore, they were accepted even though their physical appearance was, we might say, radically different from Chinese. So that's what I meant by acculturation in a dramatic fashion in this case, which will lead to acceptance as a non-barbarian.

There is, however, a harder line that surfaced occasionally during these two thousand some years. This is what we would call in modern terms something closer to a racist line. Now what is that? It is that essentially certain areas of the world are not conducive to the production of true human beings. That is, the vital forces of the area (the *Diqi* or the *Tuqi* of the area) simply do not give rise to the real human beings or the stuff that the real human beings are made of. That harder line would also occasionally surface.

The early Qing thinkers like Wang Fuzhi essentially said that minority peoples were barbarian forever simply because there was no way of changing their inherent nature. You can take the barbarian out of the barbarism, but you cannot take the barbarism out of the barbarian, as it were. So that's a harder line that occasionally surfaced as well.

During these two thousand some years, I would point out that cultural exchange and in fact DNA exchange continue. A concrete example would be the Tang founding house, the Li house. They were probably of quasi-barbarian origin. It is precisely during that time, the Tang dynasty, that you start seeing certain types of humans that are decidedly not very Chinese looking.

Look at the Tang funereal pottery, the Tang Tri-Colors, the *Sancai* figures of human beings, camels, the people riding camels and so on. There are two aspects to that. First, you notice that the riders of camels or whatever have extremely heavy facial hair, that they look different, very often with high noses and different-looking eyes. So one would assume that there must have been some kind of exchange from Inner Asia. Secondly, very often these funereal figures are playing musical instruments and these musical instruments, *pipa* or whatever, are northern barbarian musical instruments. Of course the exchange continued in both directions. That is, there were certain Chinese cultural goods that were adopted by the northern nomads as well. So in general the hard line and soft line would continue right up into the twentieth century.

However, in the early twentieth century that traditional hard line toward barbarians became intensified by, or ramified with, notions of race that were, as far as I can see, still imports from abroad. Zhang Taiyan would be a good example. He adopted a quasi-racist ideology to China. He borrowed it from a certain French thinker and then applied to China against the Manchus so that the Manchus were now really an alien people. The notion of them being aliens of course never completely disappeared, especially in the South. This notion was reinforced by the addition of what was essentially racist thought as well as, in the beginning of the twentieth century the

concepts of evolution, and especially social evolution, Social Darwinism. So the two lines end with the hard line because, of course, the Republic would succeed, and it was going to be based upon a kind of racist line against the Manchus, who were now regarded as a different race entirely. The traditional notions of the *diqu* then merge with newer notions, modern notions of race as an entity.

Northern barbarian dynasties were, as I said, Chinese style and in some cases, they were Chinese-style states before the people got to China proper itself. This was because there were always Chinese advisors, that is, people who were culturally Chinese, who would be advising the northern barbarian people how to organize a state. This happens of course many times in all of the cases of the barbarian dynasties of the North. And so it's to be expected that this would happen.

On the other hand, you have the phenomena of the cultural self-identity of the people being advised and eventually acculturated in becoming Chinese being lost. So the Mongols were somewhat more hesitant, more resistant to becoming Chinese than other previous barbarian dynasties. And therefore, they were the shortest lived. The Yuan dynasty does not really last that long. It is because they started to acculturate, I guess you would say, a bit late.

8.4.2 *The Manchus*

Now the last imperial dynasty is of course a barbarian dynasty—the Manchus who we have just discussed. Having Chinese advisors who were very well acquainted with what happened previously in Chinese history, they were faced with the same dilemma: in order to rule China, you have to become the Chinese, but then you are no longer whoever you were to begin with. This is of course a dilemma not limited to this kind of situation but it's common, I suppose you could say, in life in general when it comes to cultural matters. So the Manchus tried a middle way. They were going to be Chinese, and certainly Kangxi, the first great Qing/Manchu emperor went very, very far in that direction. On the other hand, there were certain rules laid down to preserve Manchu identity.

These would be including such things as, first of all, no intermarriage between Han and Manchu. There were certain intermarriage between Mongol and Manchu because they were an early ally of the Manchus but not with the Han.

Secondly, the Manchu language, which as I mentioned previously, was in itself a way of creating the ethnic entity known as the Manchus. By giving these various spoken language a common written language, it tended to, of course, unify them and thus create a Manchu culture. The Manchu language continued to be used in certain written documents. At the beginning of the dynasty, it was used as a kind of secret language among Manchu high officials to keep the Han officials from knowing what was going on sometimes. Later, by rule, certain types of documents had to have Manchu translation. Many other measures were taken to ensure that the Manchu language would be preserved. But in the long run, of course, this failed. There's no way of preserving a language unless it is directly necessitated by demands of life.

Self-preservation is dependent upon it. So by the early twentieth century, there were very few people who could really speak Manchu very well and almost no one who could employ the written language either. That was one of their measures to ensure the self-identity.

Another one was the imperial hunt, which at least should have taken place annually. That is, the court would return to the North and do Manchu-like things, like riding horses and shooting arrows at animals. This would be, by way of rekindling the “Manchuness,” recapturing the Manchu soul, by returning to their roots, as it were.

Another measure, which of course is the most obvious one, was that the Manchu hairstyle of a shaven front of the head with a queue of braided hair behind was adopted by the entire population, by the Han population as well, because the dynasty demanded it. And of course this in itself was not making the Manchus distinct from the Han Chinese, but it would be a cultural factor that the Chinese would have to adopt, that is purely Manchu.

Another measure would be no bound feet. The northern peoples did not bind their feet ever, neither did the Hakka speakers. For the most part, this was relatively strictly enforced. You couldn’t find any bound-footed Manchus. However, I note that the women at court would wear these very awkward shoes (platform shoes) that to a certain extent would force their gait (their way of walking) to be similar to the gait (or way of walking) that would be natural to bound feet. So to a certain extent, the Manchu ladies, at least at court, kept up with fashion in their formal dress.

Another way of ensuring a cultural self-identity would be a continuation of the political/military formation known as the Banner. Of course there were Mongol Banners as well as Manchu Banners and even Han Banners. But this organization was also preserved into the dynasty.

In the end, of course, these various measures tended to fail. I forgot another element in it. That is, Han people were forbidden to immigrate to the Manchu home areas in the Northeast. But as I was about to say, by the end of the nineteenth century, there were many Han immigrants to the Northeast. The Manchu language was starting to die out almost completely.

And so these measures were not all that successful. That’s why I think among other things that after the Qing ended, the Manchu population seemed to disappear. They were no longer—in fact, they probably weren’t to begin with—all that visible. I think that overall these measures didn’t succeed in maintaining a perfect cultural self-identity.

8.5 The Role of the Emperor

The next theme is the position and role of the Chinese monarch, the emperor. As I said, the Chinese king was unique in that he was both a Caesar, a chief political authority, as well as a Pope, the chief spiritual or doctrinal authority. That is, in both realms, he was the supreme leader. This is particular to China and occurs nowhere else in the world.

The usual emphasis, when you look especially at Western treatments of the Chinese emperor, is on his Caesar role, that is, his political role. Part of the reason for this is the first material that reached Europe about the Chinese emperor was written by Jesuits. The Jesuits presented the emperor as a managerial monarch, as an absolute monarch who was primarily interested in management, in the same way that they portrayed officials produced by the civil service exam, as well as the elite in society, the degree holders, as rational managers primarily. They did this primarily because they wanted to de-emphasize the aspects of the emperor's role that had to do with the spiritual realm. In that way, they could argue to Rome that China was really a totally secular state and that the emperor was merely a secular figure.

However, we should keep in mind that he was as much a Pope as he was a Caesar, and that his personal character and his personal behavior had literally cosmological consequences. It was through his virtue, and it was through his ritual behavior that the forces of the cosmos were kept in balance. He made the sacrifices not just for himself or his family but literally on behalf of human kind. That's why I called him a pope because he was the spiritual representative to the other world, to the other realm, of all of the humanity, not just of the Chinese Empire.

We see him, for instance, overseeing the first feeding of silkworms in the spring. His presence gives a spiritual authority to this act, this ritual and gives it efficacy. He also performs ritual plowing in the spring. That is, these ritual acts were to ensure that the forces of the cosmos were going to keep in harmony and produce natural phenomena that would be beneficial to the people. He kept the balance through correct ritual behavior. So any action of the emperors, as I said, had great significance. He could not act as normal men did in a casual fashion.

Ideally, the emperor was really supposed to be a passive figure, who simply sat facing southward and was virtuous. The efficacy of this virtue would influence the entire world. In reality of course, the better emperors tended to be the activist emperors. The ones that get big names in history are precisely those that are more active in taking action of one sort or another in the political realm.

However, again in theory, the officialdom of the empire was supposed to be the best and brightest of course that were designated and represented the emperor's authority at every level where they served and where they governed. That aspect is sometimes neglected. But in the same way that the emperor had this responsibility for the entire world, an official with his smaller jurisdiction would have kind of moral responsibility for everything going well in his area, so that even a county (*xian*) official at the bottom of the administration hierarchy could possibly be blamed for a natural event that had nothing to do with his actions, like a flood or famine or a plague of locusts. They would be in the same way indications that the spiritual authority was not being maintained properly.

In the same way, again in theory, the virtue of the official as a *Junzi* was quasi-clerical in that officialdom itself was a clergy for what you might call a state religion—not an exclusive one, mind you—but you might call it the religion of *Tian*, the religion of Heaven. It had its own pantheon of deities and very often the emperor or the court would very specifically replace one for the other. In the same way, in this spiritual realm, the emperor might appoint the ancestor of a meritorious official in this world

to some high office, or give him some honor or distinction. That is to say, the person would already be deceased but would reflect the glory, the merit of his descendents, and therefore, the emperor as Pope of the religion of Heaven would be able to maintain an authority over the other realm as well and award the deceased certain honors and distinctions.

So the civil service examination system was in a way simply a device whereby the emperor selected suitable managers—of course officials and ministers, but at the same time selected suitable clergy for this religion of Heaven. That's why when the top examination for the top degree in later times—this is the *Jinshi* degree—occurred, the emperor at least ritually would have responsibility for giving it.

8.6 Tribute System

The next topic is usually called the tribute system. That is to say, again rhetorically the relationship of the Chinese Empire's king—the emperor and the rest of the world was that of monarch and subject, and to a certain extent, Pope and members of the religious organization. That is to say, the non-culturally Chinese state usually would relate to the emperor and to the court at the capital as a subject, as a state that would present tribute to the center, to the emperor. That was at least in theory the way that all foreign relations were going to work.

In reality, of course it depends upon the time and the situation. Very often the tribute system was a fig leaf for what would amount to extortion by certain militarily powerful non-Chinese states or peoples. There were various ways in which this extortion could work. But in the end, the tribute system was all a matter of acknowledgment of authority. It did not benefit the center. It did not benefit the court or the emperor. Economically it had exactly the opposite effect. That's why it could serve as a fig leaf for a kind of extortionate behavior.

A tribute mission would, again according to the theory, present the special products of that state or of that territory. They would be presented as tribute in acknowledgment of the emperor's political as well as spiritual authority. However, the presents they received in return from the court as well as the trading privileges that they would be allotted, that is, the trade of Chinese goods, would be worth far, far, far more in plain economic terms than the worth of the local products. So this was a way of actually transferring wealth to these smaller states that acknowledged the court's (the emperor's) authority both spiritually and politically. So very often, if a particular state was powerful militarily, there would be an exchange that was even more unbalanced. The presents awarded to the tribute mission might very well be far, far, far more than the token, symbolic products, local products that would be presented in tribute.

The entire operation of the tribute system very often fell under the administration of the Board of Rites (the Board of Ceremony). You'd think that is kind of strange. Why would essentially foreign relations fall under the general rubric of rites? Well, I think it's primarily because the relationship of these peoples who are presenting tribute is one of a not quite civilized group that is going to learn to be civilized. That

is, at the very minimum, you have to act properly at the rituals in which you present your tribute products. So there was a civilizing mission of sorts that lay in back of this administration of foreign relations by the Board of Rites (the Board of Ceremony).

8.7 Familialism

The next theme we might call familialism, that is, the family. The family and the monarchy are the two most stable institutions in these several-millennia-long periods of Chinese history. The family is, as we all know, the fundamental organization of society, the family meaning of course other kin formations that are in one way or another the same thing. A lineage, for instance, would still be a family. In fact, by the Han and the emergence of the classic filial piety, you have a notion that all political relations as well should be on the model of familial relations that would make the virtue of Filial Piety itself the cornerstone of government, that the governed would act filially toward the governors and the governors would act in turn as parents of sorts, as the older generation, so that the lowest official in the hierarchy in late imperial time, the county magistrate, would be known as the father-and-mother official, the *fumu guan*. And this model was applied literally to the state itself.

These notions of familialism and the unity of the family and relations within it were of course reinforced by other concepts that we encountered very early, such as generationalism, that is, “the older is better.” It was also reinforced by ancestor worship, that is, the cult of the ancestors. Again an ancient institution that as time goes on becomes the universal institution throughout society. The primary relationship between those living in a family presently and those deceased (the ancestors) is the same as if those ancestors were still among the living. They are regarded as the same unit.

This is extremely important. It is distinctly Chinese in a way that the major concept of family that people carried around in their minds was of an eternal enterprise, one that went back to the beginning of time, I suppose, to the identifiable ancestors and forward into the ends of the time through the progeny of that family. So each individual felt himself or herself a part of an ongoing enterprise, of a group that was eternal, that the individual belonged to. So in the same way, people who were living were motivated by many other considerations, aside from simple self-preservation and building up of family fortunes. They were at the same time motivated by giving glory and distinction to the ancestors. At the same time they did this, they would further prepare the way for the progeny, would make the progeny, the unborn, basically be in a better situation so that they, too, would be able to win distinction and bring glory to the family, to this, as I said, eternal enterprise.

I don’t think that there’s anything comparable in any other civilization. Of course similar phenomena exist, but not to the extent that they did in China. So this would be one of the explanations why overseas Chinese in Southeast Asia were so successful economically. That is, the people who immigrated outward into Southeast Asia were not members of the elite. They were of the poorest sectors of society. They were

the surplus population. They were often not literate. And yet they were able to, very shortly, establish themselves economically wherever they were. This I think has to do with the motivation that's provided with this feeling of membership of this eternal organization that goes back to the beginnings of time and goes forward to the ends of time.

As I said, the people living presently, members of the family, would relate to the ancestors as they would to other members of the family, distinctly different from the way they would relate to other personages, other entities in the other realm, the other world. Other deities (actual deities, not ancestors) would be approached in a fashion as a powerful person in this world would be approached—with the words of flattery and sacrifices that were meant to serve as not exactly bribes of course but something along those lines, whereas the ancestors were nourished. They were kept through the sacrifices made by the family members in the same way that older living members of the family would be nourished by the younger members. Sometimes one gets the impression that there is a blurry/indistinct line between the other world and this world. The relationship is still a familial one. That is, you do this out of familial duty, out of a moral bond. You don't approach another deity, the Jade Emperor or something like that, as a moral bond. You have no personal relationship with the Jade Emperor. You don't owe the Jade Emperor anything. In the case of the ancestors though, of course you do owe. It is a moral obligation in the same way that in this world kin relations involve moral bonds and moral obligations.

Fei Xiaotong, one of the most noted Chinese anthropologists, certainly in the twentieth century, once described the Chinese family as a unit that could be as small as two people, that is, a couple, and could be as large as the entire world. Then he was of course referring to the flexible nature of these family units. They could depend upon certain factors, the amount of wealth available, for instance. They could grow large into entities of several hundred people. And in the case of lineages, the corporate entity of a lineage might grow even into thousands of people conceivably. And so it's very difficult sometimes to say where the borders of the family unit are. It's not at all clear.

What is clear are the mourning circles. You can calculate exactly the degree of consanguinity through certain ways that would be manifested in certain ritual ways. Well, what garments you would wear at a funeral would depend upon the degree of consanguinity to the deceased. But in the end, families could merely grow quite large and not at all be the entity that we usually assume would be a family these days, which would usually refer to parents and their minor children. The Chinese family as I said is an eternal entity that goes back in time, forward in time and then literally can extend very far indeed too.

8.8 The Position of Women

My next topic is the position of women in Chinese civilization. Now of course I am going to address this, as I have every other theme, in extremely general terms, for which you can find innumerable exceptions. In general, however, one could state that the position of women again in general was inferior to that of man. And one of the concrete manifestations of this would be the institution of concubinage; that is, there were often situations in which one male would have several wives and several spouses.

8.8.1 *Patrilineal Concept of the Family*

One of the reasons for this position of inferiority had to do with a very strict patrilineal concept of the family. That is, everything depended upon the male line, the continuation forward in time of the male's surname. A woman was destined to become part of another family just by being a woman. So upon being married, the woman would become a part of someone else's family and relate to her parents-in-law or other elder relative in that family as a male would in the original family—she would become a fully functioning member of her married family.

This did not mean in reality of course that there wasn't plenty of contact between any woman and her original family. And there was very often more contact with the family into which the woman had married and her original family than with other parts of the patrilineal organization. Sometimes the best relations would be with the wife's family rather than with the male's family.

There is, however, I think a very sharp distinction you can make between the position of women in other places in East Asia, such as Japan, possibly Republic of Korea (I don't know much about Republic of Korea), and China. There is a certain phenomenon in China that one cannot conceive of happening in Japan, for instance. In rural areas, for instance, I found that there was plenty of disrespect shown for one's male spouse. "*Women jia zhege sigui a*,"—that person at our house, that working stiff at our house—is something that I cannot imagine being voiced any place else.

8.8.2 *Women with Power*

In Chinese history of course, there were many situations in which the de facto political power was in the hands of women. There were a few famous cases, in which supreme political power was in the hands of a woman. The most extreme case was Empress Wu Zetian, who not only became the supreme political authority (in other words, she was the supreme political power in the Tang), but she founded her own dynasty and titled herself emperor, not empress. That of course was the only example of

such behavior, but at least it was possible. The more recent and equally famous case was that of the Empress Dowager, Cixi Taihou, who for many decades held supreme power at least in the court. Now because of the time in which she lived, she didn't really control all of China because the court didn't control all of China. But in the end, she as a woman was able to establish herself.

There's perhaps the most famous late imperial colloquial novel *Hongloumeng* (*The Dream of Red Chambers*). It's all about a big family. It was ruled over by a woman. In other societies, I don't know how possible that would be.

8.8.3 *The Reason for Women's Inferior Role*

So we will have to qualify the statement that women's position was inferior. Of course it was in general terms. Women couldn't become degree holders; they could not participate in the civil service examination. That would be another indication of how they were inferior, or their social position was inferior. But in the end you cannot say across the board, in every single situation, women would occupy inferior position, as there were always circumstances whereby other criteria for social status, such as age and the kin relationships, would override the gender difference.

I often think that one of the reasons why women have this inferior role perhaps in all civilizations is that women very often are regarded as representing sex, the sexual act, which is in turn regarded as the distraction from higher purposes. That is, in the case of China, of course the situation is that of someone who is studying for the examination, which as I said is a spiritual enterprise as well as an intellectual one, and along comes this very beautiful woman who is going to distract the young scholar from his moral duty. This is of course a "Fox Spirit" in guise of a beautiful woman, but the principle is the same. In Christianity, you have exactly the same kind of representations. You have the image of Saint Thomas Aquinas with a fiery torch, driving a woman from his monkish cell.

In Chinese literature, it's very often the woman who starts some kind of trouble. I think of *Shuihuzhuan* (*Water Margins Novel*) in which the trouble is very often started by a woman, very often also by some sexual activity.

This regarding of sex as the distraction from loftier enterprises seems to run through much of the Chinese culture/civilization. I think immediately of even in *The Analects*, Confucius saying (*zi yue*), "*wu weijian haode ru haose zhe ye*." That is, "I have never seen anyone whose love of virtue is as powerful as his sex drive" and that is obviously a complaint against the distractions of carnality from more serious purposes.

8.8.4 *Foot-Binding*

One of those questions eternally fascinating to foreigners about Chinese women is the long existing practice of bound feet. Now we all know what exactly is involved. The feet were bound from the age seven or so. The smaller toes would be pushed under the foot so that the arch would be broken. And so only the great toe would still be there but not functioning very well.

This practice started apparently in the Tang court. There were certain dancers at court who took to binding their feet very tightly. This practice was somehow picked up by, imitated by the court ladies, and then once they started doing it of course, there was the imitation. In fact, everybody wanted to keep up in fashion. And so it spread very rapidly throughout society after that.

Some people would estimate that the percentage of Han women with bound feet might be 60% of the entire population. I would actually put it higher than 60, maybe as high as 80% of the Han population. There were other minorities that of course did not bind feet. Neither did *kejia*, Hakka people, bind their feet. But the problem is that once such a practice, a fashion is set, then it becomes a subject of competition. That is, if one family does it and they get benefits from it because it's popular in some way, then all other families in competition with that family would do it. Now as applied to the marriage market, this means that everyone would compete, and they would have to compete in self-defense to have their daughters married. So what happens eventually of course is that the appearance of small feet and even the gait, the way of walking, that is forced upon someone with small feet, bound feet, becomes eroticized. And it also becomes a sign of refinement of high-class behavior to walk that way.

Now there are explanations for the more refined association as well as the eroticized association. One way of explaining the persistence of these practices through long period of time, certainly from ninth century onward, is that by having women of your household essentially being crippled, you are manifesting a kind of conspicuous consumption. That is to say, we are so well off that we can afford to have our women essentially crippled, in the same way that, you know, things like neckties, which are completely useless and might get in the way if you are doing something physical, or shined shoes or any number of other things, are manifestations of a kind of conspicuous consumption to show that you don't have to engage in manual labor. That was an underlying rationale for many features of clothing and certain other social practices as well. A conspicuous consumption of that sort would indicate our status is higher. We can afford to do this kind of things. So there is an association with higher classes, with refinement, with higher culture because this conspicuous consumption element remains.

That would be more difficult to explain in that of course having a crippled foot would hardly appear to be an erotic object to people today certainly. However, I think that both of these associations can be explained by a simple illustration today. That is, high-heeled shoes are more or less the norm around the world. They have two implications, most especially in the West. One is of the refinement, of being

more formal. Formal wear at the office or anywhere else always involves high-heeled shoes for women. Anytime anyone dresses up, they are going to wear high-heeled shoes. And I think that these days this is not limited at all to the West. It's practically everywhere. There's an association with formality, with higher-class kinds of lifestyles, and consequently an aesthetic association being quite positive. That is directly similar because high-heeled shoes again are a kind of conspicuous consumption. You cannot do heavy labor with high-heeled shoes on; your actions are quite limited because of the shoes that you are wearing; you cannot walk long distance; and so on. So, that is perfectly understandable.

What about the eroticization? Basically, there's another parallel with the high-heeled shoes. Apparently, they are now universally associated with eroticism. That is, the position of the muscles of the leg and those of the lower body that high-heeled shoes force to create is a universal eroticizing sight for males. In the same way, the walk necessitated by having bound feet has been eroticized so that the walk itself had not only aesthetic associations but also erotic ones.

8.8.5 The Relationship Between Daughter-In-Law and Mother-In-Law

Now of course what I've said is only concerning traditional China. I am not going to say anything about the contemporary state of women in China. I will observe, however, that the plight of women was certainly never very easy primarily because when they moved into their new family, which was then their family, they were powerless against the authority of their mother-in-law. Their mother-in-law had been dominated by her mother-in-law, and she would in turn tend to dominate and even exploit her daughter-in-law.

8.9 Conclusion

So we've just discussed these eight themes that seem to run through over two thousand years of Chinese history, and that constitute major elements in Chinese civilization. As I said before, they are discussions of these topics at an extremely high level of generalization and somewhat abstract. So they cannot be taken literally. There are innumerable exceptions of everything I've said. And of course we could add further themes as much as these that I brought up that run through the imperial period of Chinese civilization. But you have to stop somewhere and so I stopped at these eight.

Chapter 9

Changes Over Two Millennia



The next topic we are going to discuss is related to the previous one we have spoken before of persistent themes in Chinese history from 700 B.C. through the nineteenth century. That is, there were patterns that are easily seen and that persisted through two millennia. Now we are going to talk about in very general terms the changes that took place during the same two millennia.

There are eight different changes that were more important than others. Any of the pronouncements I make over the long term, as I have said, are of such high level of generalization that you can't take them literally. That is to say, there are of course innumerable exceptions to any generalization that you would make about a civilization as complicated as China over two millennia. Nevertheless, we are looking for patterns.

9.1 Historiographical Approach

Before I begin that, I would like to say a word or two about my own historiographical approach. It could be described in a term, one of my own invention, of "eclectic common sense." That is, any methodology, any mode of analysis that would be useful can be employed. Simultaneously, you can use several to approach the same phenomenon. You can analyze multiple dimensions of the same phenomenon. Do not pay any attention to the surface contradictions between these modes of analysis. This is indeed one contribution of the post-modern worldview. That is to say, there is no one right answer when it comes to human affairs. There are multiple correct interpretations.

A kind of such example would be, if we take modern Chinese history, the phenomena of the May Fourth Movement. That could be analyzed on several levels of course, privileging one or another aspect. For instance, there is a psychological aspect, the relationship of the fall of the monarchy and the deauthorization of all levels of authorities consequently. That would be a psychological interpretation. That line would be privileging the psychological dimension. Well, valid. At the same time, you could use a socioeconomic interpretation as well. That is, prior to the second decade of the twentieth century, or prior to the first decade of the twentieth century, there was no critical mass of the modern-style students who went to a Western-style school. That is, there were indeed at the end of the Qing some patriotic movements, for instance, the anti-American boycott of 1905. But they were minor. It took further growth of certain sectors of urban society, namely, in this case, the education; it took students coming back to China and teaching in these modern-style institutions, for a phenomenon like the May Fourth Movement to happen. So these are two contrasting ways of approaching the same phenomena.

My point is that you could use both approaches simultaneously. There is no one correct interpretation or no one area of the phenomenon such as psychological or socioeconomic that would be more correct than another.

Another way of putting it is all events are multi-causal. There are many, many causes that converge in time. Factors come together; they cross. Longer-term trends come together and cross at one point of time. These convergences would produce results. If you remove one or more of these factors, or one or more of these long-term trends, from the convergence, the result will be different. That is to say, every event is over-determinant. There is no one cause and one effect.

In fact, all of social sciences in general are modeled on the natural sciences. In the natural sciences, it is taken for granted that there is one cause for every one effect. When water reaches a certain temperature, it will have this effect, namely ice. That is, one cause—temperature causes this one definite effect. It's mono-casual.

In human affairs, however, this simply doesn't work. I mean, we can reflect on even our own lives and see the important role that historical contingencies play. If you removed one factor that at this point of time was combined with other factors, then the effect would essentially be different. It is common sense to think of things in that way. So that's why I call my approach "eclectic common sense."

If you tie yourself to a systematic mode of interpretation that doesn't allow for multiple causations, then in my opinion, you are going to be in error because these models of natural sciences, when applied to human affairs, have never really worked. For the last century or so, there have been innumerable attempts to reason out, from

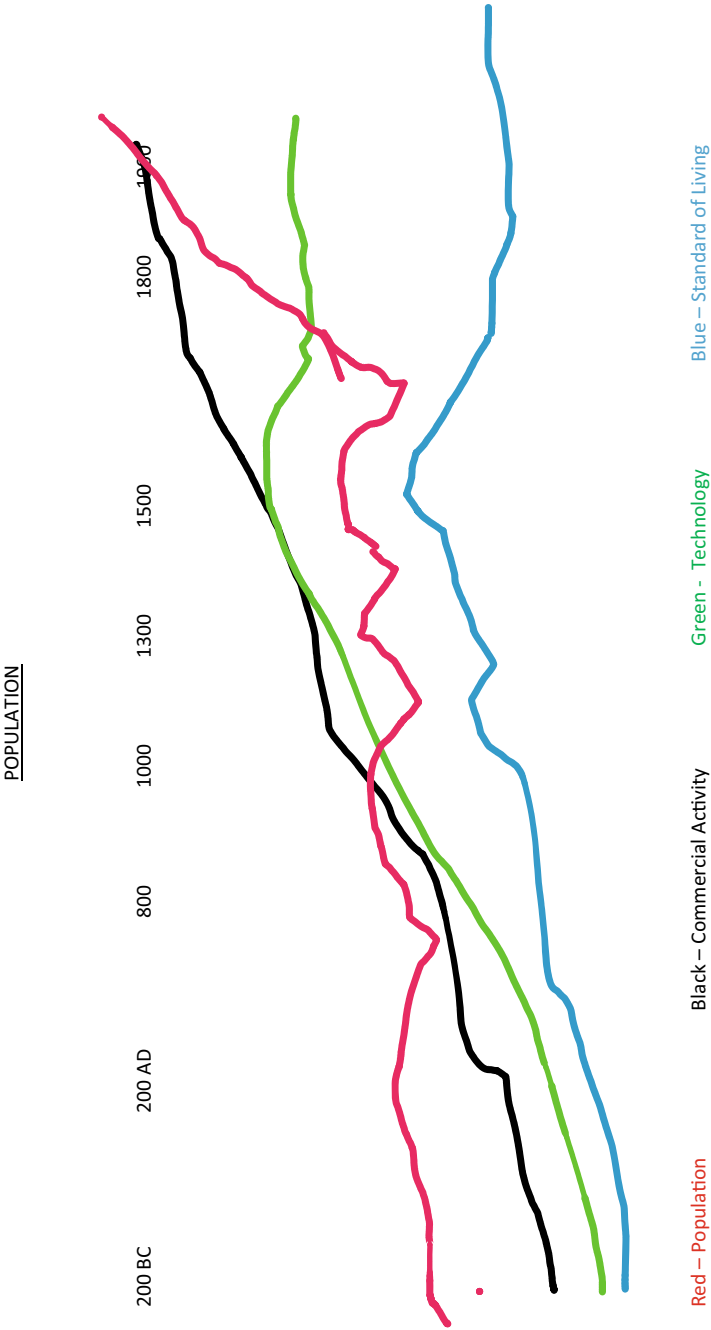
certain universal laws, from society or whatever, future development of humanity, that is, general future development, and not one of the major developments in human that you might call social or other revolution, economic revolution, was right. That is to say, all failed. So I would emphasize that no one cause is responsible for any particular effect, even though of course one has to mention a primary cause. It doesn't mean that in the end the primary cause or the more important factor is the only one.

What I am going to try to do now is to address these long-term changes in two millennia. In general, they take the form of a spiral. That is, in most areas, for economic growth, technology, levels of commercialization, there is an eventual, gradual increase overall as with the spiral. As the spiral continues, there are cycles within it. It's not an even, linear progression. In fact, certain other historical contingencies do intervene, in most cases, economic growth, technology, commercialization, for instance, as well as population growth. The Yuan Dynasty sending people all southward slows them or stops them or in some cases, reverses them. That is, of course, historical contingency.

9.2 Socio-Economic Transformation

Now the first topic that I am going to talk about is the socioeconomic transformation of Chinese society that took place roughly from the ninth (the late Tang) through the eleventh centuries and then onward. Of course the same trend intensified during the following Song Dynasty.

This transformation is often associated with historian Naito Torajirō, historian of China of Japanese origin. He pointed out that during this period of time starting in the ninth century, the levels of commercial activity, the levels of urbanization and the way that society was put together, not of course the growth of middle class but the growth of non-governmental urban classes, were not directly connected with the state and the state offices. The entire society was more oriented toward commercial activity. And this continued and of course intensified through time. This is a very simple chart, simple figure—I won't even call it a chart—that would indicate the type of rise that we are talking about.



From ninth to eleventh century, there was a leap forward in size of cities, in commercialization and in all of those accompanying phenomena that usually went along with these. If you made a figure to reflect these phenomena, it would look something like this, that is, from ninth to eleventh century, a leap forward, but the general trend did not stop. There was through time a continued transformation of society in that direction, aside from the Yuan period, it is more or less spiral, upward.

9.3 Population

The second large-scale change in these two thousand some years is population. This is perhaps the single most important factor, the historical dynamic that will affect the development of Chinese civilization—population.

9.3.1 *Cycle of Population Changes*

When we were speaking of the dynastic cycle, you might recall that I had indicated a figure that was similar to this. You can see here up and down. The top part of each cycle is the height of a dynasty. It is at that point that population has reached the saturation point. And after that, population contributes to the decline of economic conditions and eventually the decline of the dynasty itself. At the bottom of the cycle, there is a period of general chaos in which the population drops to its lowest point. That is, as I said continuance of chaos and warfare means that mortality rates go up and birth rates go down, and of course no other contributors to population growth, such as economic growth, are there either. So you have increasing population and then in the interregnum period between dynasties, a low point.

Now roughly—this is speaking again very generally—you could have a figure of this sort that runs almost in the eighteenth century to a high point of population that would be 80 million. It is very difficult to estimate. But, let's say, in the Han, the height of Han's population might be 80 million. Of course it might be 60 million, too. There is no way of telling. When the population declined in the interregnal period, it would probably be closer to half of whatever it was. It was probably 40 million. So this is the rise and fall of population that to a certain extent corresponds to the rise and fall of stability, in other words, of dynasties, of states.

There are certain points, however, that that figure of 80 million was exceeded, but not by much or very often. But it exceeded and in the following period, declined. The low point would then still be something in the neighborhood of 40 million. This peaking of population seems to have something to do with levels of commercial activity or commercial growth. For instance, the first high point that we had as high as 100 million, was the late Song. You had a peak of commercial activity, a peak of economic growth, and a peak of technological innovation.

The next time that happened was in similar circumstances, in the late Ming where again there was a spurt of urbanization, commercialization—some people would add capitalism. And at that point, the population might also have reached over 100 million. It is important to remember that in the case of Ming, the usual Malthusian checks (i.e., food supply, disease and other population checks) were still playing out. For instance, at the very end of Ming, in the 1630s, there was a large-scale epidemic that decreased the population considerably.

9.3.2 *Population Explosion*

Nevertheless, what we see after that is extremely striking. At the end of the seventeenth century (i.e., the beginning of the Qing Dynasty), because of general peace and stability, the population seemed to start climbing again. So by the beginning of the eighteenth century, it might have recovered from the late Ming. The late Ming of course suffered from devastating chaos. One thing is of the Sichuan Basin. It must have been almost completely depopulated by the late Ming rebel Zhang Xianzhong. So it's very difficult to say what that low point was but it certainly must be pretty low.

By the beginning of the eighteenth century, the speculation is the population probably rose again to something close to 80 or 90 million. What happened during the eighteenth century is a great mystery. It's something that can't be completely explained through the usual methods of explanation. So what happened during the eighteenth century is that the population explosion was unprecedented. China's population in 1,400 was probably a sixth of what its population was in the 1850s. During that period of the eighteenth century, the population probably doubled or more. So by the end of the eighteenth century, the population might have reached 250 million. And then because of the geometric nature of population growth, by the 1850s, it could have reached 450 million or more.

Now this fact of a population explosion—the breakthrough was in the eighteenth century—is the single most important factor in determining what happened in the development of Chinese civilization after that. We have an increasing population that was unprecedented without any great change in the technologies of production. They did not change too much during this period and in fact, some people would say that they stagnated altogether, so the mystery is why this happened. Once we acknowledge it, innumerable effects are caused by it. What could have been the causes of this population explosion?

9.3.2.1 Infusion of New World Crops

Well, the first and perhaps the most obvious was in the late Ming there was a great infusion of New World crops from the Americas. These types of crops, such as sweet potatoes, watermelons, maize and peanuts, were able to be cultivated in very poor

soil, sometimes sandy soil, which in fact meant that there was an increase in total arable land. There was an increase of total amount in the means of production, that is to say, agricultural production. Now we know that certain of these crops spread immediately everywhere. Sweet potatoes, for instance, spread extremely rapidly and very soon became a kind of staple food of the poor. The other, plain old potato did not have similar success. It was only the sweet potato. Maize (corn) would be another example of New World crop that provided the crude food for the masses. Minor elements like peanuts again could be cultivated in poorer soil but produce good number of calories and protein that were not available previously. So that is one possible cause. The general importation of these crops essentially increased arable land surface.

9.3.2.2 Peace and Stability

Another factor and one that is often mentioned is peace and stability. First under the Ming, and then under the first three great emperors of the Qing, that of course is during the eighteenth century, you have long-term peace and stability.

9.3.2.3 Rise of World Temperature

Another factor which we can now determine but still there is no way of telling why is that world temperature seems to have increased a degree or two during the eighteenth century. So we have a similar rise in crop yield in Europe for the same reason at the same time in the eighteenth century. In the case of China, of course, even a one or one and a half degree increase in temperature resulted in enormous amount of food stuff that would have not been produced otherwise.

9.3.2.4 Greater Availability of Medical Knowledge

There's another factor that I think is quite important but no one seems to mention. Because through time there continued to be economic growth and technological advance, books became less expensive. That is, books could be more widely distributed. More people could afford to buy books.

And one type of knowledge that was indeed diffused and was crucial to population growth was these pediatrician handbooks (case books) kept by physicians who were specialists in childbirth and I guess gynecological areas. These case books all conveyed the importance of sterilizing something to cut the umbilical cord. The introduction of this action alone into the masses of people would have had quite an important effect on population growth.

In pre-modern times, the single most important factor in population growth or limitation on it was infant mortality. Infant mortality rates went down, and the population increased far more rapidly than it would have otherwise. In some cases, at

certain areas, it would be taken for granted that perhaps half of all infants would not survive. Even in the colloquial Chinese language, what is celebrated is not the child's birth exactly. It's *manyue*, the first month of life that has been completed. This would be an excellent indication that the child might actually live. A great many infants died in childbirth or a short time afterward. So I would count the greater availability of medical knowledge, especially pertaining to child birth, as another factor that might have contributed to this population explosion of the eighteenth century.

9.3.2.5 Better Nourishment

Because you were still having some economic growth, if not technological growth, together with these New World crops, probably there was better nourishment available for more people during this period. So I can't think of any other factor that might have been responsible. In the end, it's still a mystery.

9.3.2.6 Cultural Values

Probably more than anything else, it is culturally determined. That is, if one's major enterprise in life is to continue the "incense stream," to continue the family line into the future, to have progeny, then of course you don't stop doing that because times are bad. Another way of putting it is: I have plowable land and I have two sons, but the plowable land could only absorb the labor of one son efficiently. If there are two people working on the same plowable land, you have a marginal return on the input of additional labor. So does that mean that I'm going to "fire" my son? No, of course not. That's not the way family ethics work. That's not how the family works. So this might indeed combine with the lowering of infant mortality rates. It might have been a factor possibly.

Having said that, we still must emphasize that population is the single most important historical force on the scene in early modern times and modern times. And it is purely internal historical dynamic generated within China without any forces/influences coming from the outside. So when we get to modern history, it is population that would determine along with other factors converging in time much of the way that the course of events unfolds.

9.4 Technology

The next long-term change is technology. That is, in general, there is a gradual but persistent/continuous advance technologically through time. Technological advances tend to be in the same period of other types of growth, commercial growth for instance, and they do not stop entirely although they did during the Yuan. But then after that, they still persisted until around the seventeenth century. It is precisely at that time

of course that at the other end of the Eurasian Continent, in Europe, the opposite was happening. That is, the scientific revolution and the economic, technological innovations now began. At precisely the same time, Chinese technological innovation seemed to cease entirely.

We owe an enormous debt to the scholar of Chinese science and technology Joseph Needham, whose large-scale research project has produced much of what we know about technological growth in pre-modern China. His students continue this research of course today. I would say another word about the nature of the technologies that were developed. They are extremely ingenious but do not tap non-muscle modes of power. Never do these technologies have non-renewable energy sources. Everything is ecologically quite good in traditional types. It might have something to do partially with the general worldview—the ideology of harmony of Heaven, earth and humans. It might have something to do with that, but in any case, all things, all materials are recycled in essence.

The major, the most important single one of course is the waste of humans or animals that would provide for a perfect cycle. This is most interesting because even in the early twentieth century, there was an American agronomist named H. H. King who took a tour of China, Japan and Korea and went back to the United States and wrote a book *Farmers of Forty Centuries*, in which he praised the system and advocated its use in the United States as well as Europe. This is quite significant, given our present concerns universally about renewable energy and about environmental destruction. This is quite significant in that respect.

Certain non-renewable sources of energy, such as oil, were noted in China very early. The first term that appeared for oil is *feishui*, fat water, but it is never exploited. It is never developed, so that this type of non-renewable energy simply did not get used at all. We might say that general technologies in China are ecologically friendly. I think of the utilization of the wind power in transportation. The Chinese wheelbarrow is a single-wheeled one with the wheel in the center, which is far more efficient than the Western-style wheelbarrow of two wheels, with less friction that slows it down. And added to these wheelbarrows are sails, that is, a utilization of wind power for transportation. It's quite ingenious in a way because it's far more efficient to transport everything including human beings in this fashion than all other alternatives, sedan chair, for instance. You could travel quite a distance in a wheelbarrow carrier van completed with sails consuming a minimal amount of energy sources.

As I said, by the seventeenth century, Chinese technological innovation had slowed down. Other very important technological innovations had been played out; they had reached their peak. Perhaps the single most important one was the development of new rice strains, early ripening rice, that is. By this time, seventeenth century, you couldn't possibly get another crop of rice out of new strain development. It had reached its upper limit. Then of course in some areas you could have three crops of rice, depending upon climatic conditions. And certainly this is an important technology developed, but each technology has its limitations, has its ceiling that do not allow for pushing beyond. Early ripening rice is one of those.

9.5 Commercial Activity

The next long-term change is that of levels of commercial activity. As I said, there was a great leap forward in general commercial activity starting in the ninth century which continued until the Yuan, and then continued upward after that in the Ming.

What does commercial activity mean? It means any kind of trade at all and there is no question that the trade levels developed gradually, but taken overall, there was a decided increase in general commercial activity.

There was a development, for instance, of certain commercial instruments. Bank notes very early in the Yuan were in common use. And these other types of instruments that would make trade easier continued to be developed through the period. There was greater and greater commercialization so that by the Ming, everything was on the market, including such things as grain. There were grain markets in the Yangtze Valley areas. More and more people would produce more things for markets over time. That is, the proportion of those producing for a market as opposed to subsistence farming was persistently, gradually increasing through time. So by the Ming, it's very difficult to say whether a farmer was really a peasant in the European sense. Even in the Song, I have the impression that subsistence farming was decreasing in favor of production for markets.

One indication of the way that commercial activity levels are increasing is to count the periodical markets. A periodic market itself as an institution is not particular to China. It occurs elsewhere in the world, I think, Eastern Africa, for instance. But nowhere else in the world did it have the same importance overall. It meant that everyone, at least every household head, was also an entrepreneur and was also a businessman because there would be dealing in a market every few days. They would not be simply devoted to agricultural production, or any one similar economic activity; everyone was a businessman. And this I believe, certainly by the Qing, had developed into a mindset.

Certainly, the people that I've interviewed who were active in the 20s, 30s and 40s in rural China thought in that fashion as entrepreneurs did and as CEOs of companies did, that is, utilization of resources for maximum profit, for maximum effect. It doesn't mean of course that they were commercially driven, but they thought of mobilization of resources and investment and so on in a very similar way to the head of a corporation. We're talking about household heads at this point. But I was really struck by this. I never expected to have this mentality be so obvious, so manifested and so taken for granted. No one ever explicitly said anything of that sort, but after speaking to hundreds of people for hundreds of hours, you started getting a certain sense of the way that rural people operated—they thought of the world and managed the world. Certainly, the mindset of an entrepreneur was well established in a way that it wasn't in the masses of population anywhere else in the world.

This to a certain extent would explain the remarkable commercial success that the Chinese had immediately upon immigrating to other parts of the world, such as Southeast Asia. Basically, wherever the Chinese went, they developed the area commercially, so that many of the cities of Southeast Asia originated or were greatly

augmented by Chinese commercial activity. Singapore of course is one example. They were still able to establish themselves very quickly as commercial elite.

How would that be possible with any other population in the world? Well, the answer is it would never be possible. And I think certainly one of the factors involved in this is the periodical market, the ubiquitous nature of the periodical market in late imperial Chinese society.

9.6 Leveling of Society

The next long-term trend I would call “leveling,” that is, the leveling of society and enormous increase over time of social, economic and political mobility, especially socioeconomic mobility.

9.6.1 Civil Service Examination System

Of course the major factor in this long-term trend is the development of the civil service examination system which has no parallel anywhere else in the world. It is a unique product of Chinese civilization.

Essentially, the maturation of the system took place during the Tang. As we have been speaking, it had certain adumbrations in such documents as the Confucian classics: *The Analects* and *The Mencius*. And the ideal was always present. There was even in the Han an “examination system,” but most of the officials of the empire were not products of the examination system. Basically, it was not meritocratic system yet.

In the middle of the Tang, we have, as I have mentioned before, the female monarch Wu Zetian, whose situation was that most of the elites opposed her so she had to find her own allies. One way of doing this was to increase the number of officials who were produced by the examination system. This was one of several watershed events that took place and produced the final version of the examination system.

By the time of the Song, it had completely matured. And as you could see in the works of several historians (including a former colleague of mine He Bingdi [Ping-ti Ho as he is known]), the Song provided greater socioeconomic mobility than any other time in Chinese history and of course much greater social/political mobility than any other place in the world. That is, you could literally go usually in three generations from the lowest sector of society to the very highest, or of course conceivably in two generations. That is, this was a system open to merit, to intelligence. It rewarded prolonged effort. So that is the single most important factor in what I was speaking of as the general tendency for leveling of society. In the earlier periods, you have large magnate families (powerful local families) that were in effect overseeing their own little kingdoms or states. This gradually gave way to a more and more bureaucratically-ordered empire with personnel drawn from the population in general.

There were again over the long two-thousand-year period other similar leveling tendencies that can be observed I think even in the last dynasty—the Qing. There were certain classifications of people who by birth would be designated as “mean people.” They could not participate in the civil service exam; they were not “respectable.” These would include, depending upon the period, offspring or sons, in this case, of prostitutes or of actors or of various other people of that sort, and even what you might call an ethnic group, that is, the Boat People. In Chinese, they were called the Egg People, *danmin*, a group of people who spent their entire life on boats. They were designated as a group that was mean. They were not allowed to participate in the examination system. So those limitations and those designations were removed from the statues during the Qing.

9.6.2 Disappearance of *Zhuangyuan*

Another long-term trend that you would observe starting from the mid-Tang through the Ming to the Qing is the disappearance of *zhuangyuan* (manor) that might be like mini-states. It might include hundreds or thousands of people, permanent agricultural workers. And that family would have a dominating influence in its geographic area. The institution of the *zhuangyuan* through time became less and less prominent. There were some remnants in the Ming, but by the end of the Ming and of course the early Qing, they seemed to be more or less gone as a major institution in Chinese society. So this, too, would be a manifestation of a general tendency toward leveling.

Social leveling, however, does not imply any element of democratization. In fact, it's a very interesting contrast. The courts of the Yuan, the Ming and the Qing, the emperors, the throne, tended to be far more despotic than the courts of the emperors of the Song and the Tang.

It's in the later dynasties, in those later periods that the relationship between the high ministers and the emperor seemed to have undergone a fundamental change: in open court one could address the emperor only from a position of kneeling, and the emperor could have any minister beaten in the full view of the court any time. The status of the minister vis-à-vis the throne was obviously lowered, whereas in the Song, for instance, there was a closer, of course not equal, but a closer status between the two so that the emperor and the ministers could sit down together and conduct business at one table.

In the later periods, you had a situation whereby the emperor was seated on a higher throne on a raised platform and the high officials would be kneeling or standing in reverence below. The conduct of court business would be far more formalized as well.

9.7 Statutization of the *Li*

It is clear that even from the Han onward, you have a process whereby the *Li*, that is, the customary social rules, etiquette rules of society, got statutized. That is to say, they are gradually written into law.

Cases were built upon the particular statutes involved so that any of these many social rules became more and more precisely defined. It meant, among other things, that the social rules were somewhat authorized. They were now committed to writing into the law itself, and therefore by the very nature of building up the case law, would become more precisely defined through time, leaving less and less space for the individual freedom outside of that rule or in the performance of that rule.

9.8 The Status of Women

The next long-term topic I would address and one that is related to the previous one, the statutization of the *Li*, is the status of women. The status of women underwent great change precisely during this period of economic growth and commercial growth, in the late Tang and certainly into the Song.

We've already spoken of what happened in the Tang. Bound feet started becoming fashion and spread rapidly through society so that by the Song, it was fixed as a general practice that everyone could be participated in. Aside from that though, women's roles were less defined, as of course anyone else's was, before the Song. That is, the statutization of *the Li* proceeded further during the Song, thus defining women's roles in a more detailed fashion, and thus limiting women's activity more than previously.

A very graphic example would be contrasting Tang paintings of women and those of the Song. The first thing that you would notice in looking at Tang paintings of women, court ladies, for instance, is that they tend to be healthily plump, kind of heavy. They are shown to be doing various physically demanding activities, physically vigorous activities, such as horseback riding or even household chores that require some strength in their performance. They are much more vigorous-looking people.

That contrasts with the way that women are depicted in Song paintings. They are now in the Song all very willowy, very thin, and very delicate-looking. They are never shown doing anything physically vigorous. They are shown primarily as objects sitting some place or standing some place. They are no longer the robust physical specimens that are depicted in Tang paintings.

Of course the spread of the practice of foot binding would have something to do with this, but there's something else involved here, a change in aesthetics standard on what constitutes feminine beauty. Obviously, there was a change of this sort taking place. It never went backward. That is, during the later dynasties after the Song, it never returned to the more robust aesthetic ideal of woman as was in the Tang. This

is of course a very significant phenomenon because it shows that women's status changed remarkably and not for the better during the same period in which society was developing very vigorously commercially and economically.

9.9 Establishment of an Orthodoxy

Finally, I'd like to make another observation about the long-term trends in these two thousand some years of imperial history. This observation is essentially one of great irony.

The beginning of the concept of conscience, of interior knowledge of the good, as we have said, is in *The Mencius*. In *The Mencius*, there is the possibility, although it never mentioned, that one person's conscience might be different from another's because the stress is on the individual conscience. It's always taken for granted, though, not just by *The Mencius*, but every other Chinese text up until maybe the late Ming, that there is a perfect identity between what the individual conscience is and the universal principles of the universe.

Moreover, there is a further assumption that the social customs, the social rules embodied in the *Li*, are essentially identical with the principles of the cosmos. That is, everyone's conscience, if properly developed, is identical with larger principles of the cosmos, and they are the equivalent of the *li* of society, the *lijiao mingjiao*. In fact, as I've said, that kind of *Li* of social usage and social rules is the equivalent of the Heavenly *Li*, of the *Tianli*. This is taken for granted. There is never any doubt. This is so. No one ever speculates beyond that until the late Ming and some students of the great philosopher Wang Yangming—I'm speaking specifically of the Taizhou School—do push the limits. They do start disassociating the *Li* of society, the social rules and the *Li* of the universe.

This is of course the first time and only time that this happens. From at least a modern/Western point of view, this seems strange. That is, the logical development of the concept of individual conscience should play itself out as a distinction made between an individual conscience and the conscience of others', and certainly, the social rules specified or delineated in society and by society.

There should be, one would expect, a "Protestant" development, Neo-Confucianism that we can say more or less originated in the Song is to a certain extent a further development in that direction, because it, too, stresses interior consciousness. A great historian of Neo-Confucianism, William Theodore de Bary of Columbia University, actually equates the development of Neo-Confucianism (i.e., *Lixue*) with the development of Protestantism in the West. They are similar in many respects in that they are breaking with convention, and are Protestant-like movements against the dominant religious structure, I suppose you could say.

Now one wonders why there is never any Protestant-like development in reality. Throughout this entire period, no one ever speculated that there is a difference between social usages *li* and the *li* of the cosmos. It should be inherent in Neo-Confucianism that this is the possibility, but no one develops in that direction. Because

Neo-Confucianism is the further development of *The Mencius*, the idealist wing of Confucianism, there should be more room for individual interpretation. It is by its very nature. That's why de Bary stresses it's similar to Protestantism (*xinjiao*, the Protestant stance) that developed in Europe in the seventeenth century.

Now that didn't happen in actuality. For the first time in its history, China, or the Chinese state, established an orthodoxy. By the end of the Song, you have the establishment of a "correct" interpretation to be used in the examination system itself, and thus, of course the Cheng brothers and Zhu Xi's interpretations became the orthodoxy and the interpretation demanded by the examination system. This is most ironic because of the nature of Neo-Confucianism, one would expect, leads to the opposite direction.

Again in the Ming when Zhu Yuanzhang established a true orthodoxy of a doctrine, I suppose you could say, for the examination system, he himself authored a document that stressed *sanjiao heyi*, the eclectic combination of the three different approaches, that is, Buddhism, Taoism and Confucianism.

The Qing followed in this respect and also stressed an orthodoxy, so one wonders why (maybe one doesn't wonder why) there is such a divergence in the way that the European Protestantism developed and the "Chinese Protestantism," that is, Neo-Confucianism, developed. Neo-Confucianism by its nature should be against orthodoxies, but in actuality it itself became an orthodoxy. This I think is one of the great ironies of the development of Chinese civilization.

Chapter 10

Late Imperial State and Society (Qing)



10.1 Bureaucracy and Gentry

Our next topic is the relationship between the elite (that is to say, the gentry, the degree holders, the people who have civil service examination degrees) and the state, their relationship with political power, relationship with wealth and relationship with the official ideology. The degree holders—that’s generally what I am referring to when I say the elite—are a peculiar Chinese product. That is, nowhere else in the world is there quite the same kind of elite that had emerged certainly by the ninth/tenth centuries.

We are going to speak mostly of the late imperial era and specifically the Qing Dynasty. But it makes no difference: the basics are the same for the entire late imperial period. They were dependent upon the state, because of course the state held the civil service examinations. Yet at the same time, once they achieved such a distinction of having been a degree holder, then they were in society itself an elite. So they were, on the one hand, dependent completely upon the state for these distinctions; and on the other, back in their home areas in society when they weren’t serving in office, they were independent of the state.

10.1.1 *The Elite and Political Power*

There were three levels of examination in late imperial times in the Qing. The top degree was the *Jinshi*. That was always held in the capital, in Beijing itself and theoretically given by the emperor or held by the emperor directly, as I have mentioned earlier. The next degree (lower degree) is *Juren*. If you had a *Juren* or of course the higher degree, the *jinshi*, then you were qualified to hold office. The lowest level of the three degrees usually termed the *Xiucai*—if you had such a degree, you’d be a *Shengyuan*, you’d be a “licentiate”—was sufficient to give you privileges of the gentry, privileges of degree holders. But it would not be sufficient for you to actually

hold office. It was this lower degree quota and numbers of people gaining this degree in the Qing that rose considerably. The lowest degree exam was held usually in the prefecture. And the next degree *Juren* exam was held in the capital of the province.

Once you did gain a lower degree, your first degree, then you and your family immediately received certain privileges. For instance, there were such types of dress that would indicate you were a degree holder. You could have a flagpole outside your house, indicating that therein dwelt a degree-holding family. As everything else, the distinction, privilege or classification, achieved by a member of a family would essentially be shared by the entire family. You could also have immunity, of course, from corvée labor and from corporal punishment.

The most important privilege that you would have by gaining a lower degree, however, was primarily social. You were a member of the elite in your home area. If of course anyone was serving in office, because of the “law of avoidance,” they could not serve in their home area, their home province. But a lower degree holder would be in the same area that he grew up in. And he would already have these privileges and distinctions that made his social status quite distinct from the commoners. It meant in all official documents there was a sharp distinction between the *min* (the commoners) and the degree holders (the *shen*, *shenshi*). And this was extremely important. Once you had gained that social distinction, then you could enter a completely different social world. You had, among other things, social access to the officials, to officialdom. This access was in effect the primary property that a lower degree holder would have, that he could “sell” in one fashion or another. He could, for instance, perform a broker role between the state and clients in local society. That would mean essentially performing as a lawyer would in a modern society, or as a lobbyist would in modern society. There were various other roles that one could adopt. If one had the basic degree (the fundamental, lowest degree), you could, for instance, take up work for the state-managing projects of one sort or another.

It was precisely at this time when the population had gone through the roof and the number of lower degree holders had also risen, that the state, because of this population explosion, was unable to handle many of the functions that at least previously it had some handle on. So by the nineteenth century, you had a kind of push-pull mechanism in place, whereby lower degree holders were looking around for things to do, and the state, because of increasing population, is looking to job out work.

In this social status, you are essentially able to sell your access to officialdom as well as by association to sell other people's social status. I remember, for instance—this is somewhat exaggerated, but probably true enough to life—at the beginning of the colloquial novel *Rulin waishi* (*The Scholars*), a certain person is talking about having been able to call upon socially a Mr. Wei who is a local gentry type (a degree holder) and so he says, “If mister Wei returns my visit, nobody would dare bring their animals into my fields to feed.” That is, I have essentially been able to raise my own status by, even in the most indirect and slightest way, associating with a degree holder, with a local gentryman.

10.1.2 *The Elite and Wealth*

What was the relationship of this elite to wealth? Well, no surprise, the higher the degree was, essentially the greater wealth you could achieve. You achieved this wealth in various ways, certainly not by simply holding office and receiving a salary, but in one fashion or another, to put your access to official power either directly as being an official or indirectly by being able to approach an official on the “open market.” The big money-making ability that you had was essentially due to your social status.

Money of course or wealth was necessary to maintain a lifestyle that was expected of any degree holder. There was a certain lifestyle that would have to be maintained, if you had already achieved a status. You had to have certain equipages, certain type of house, library, servants, clothes and so on that would essentially require wealth. Interestingly, the lifestyle of the degree holder was copied by everyone else. Of course there were certain limitations as to how close they could approximate it. But this was an elite that was easily identifiable and eminently emulatable. Everyone wanted to live the same lifestyle as them. They set the tone; they set the style for good living in society in general.

There were of course poor degree holders. Even though they had a degree, they were still relatively poor indeed. School teachers, for instance—lower degree holders teaching school—would still be of low-income status. They would not be having a large amount of wealth accumulated by teaching school. However, it was still expected of them to put on a show. So you had a phenomenon among the lower gentry of a kind of “shabby gentility”—that’s what one would call it. That is, you couldn’t quite keep up with the real elite’s manifestation of lifestyle because it cost too much. You try to approximate the same lifestyle, but without the wealth you would be unable to achieve it completely. So that’s why I thought the term “shabby gentility” would be most apt.

One of the other ways in which this elite was imitable—aside from the general lifestyle—was the way they participated in the *Li*. That is to say, they set the tone for proper conduct of ceremony, of those life events that were in some way marked off by rites, weddings, funerals and so on. Now they would, at least as far as their wealth could let them, try to approximate the ideal of whatever role they were playing. If it was a member of a family whose parent was deceased, he/she would try to approximate the ideal funereal procedures. In some cases, if you did it completely right, it would last for many weeks from beginning to end. And so we had this model of the *Li* being performed by this elite and everyone else who had the wherewithal to do so would try to approximate the elite’s participation.

There was generally, as I hinted, a kind of overlap between this degree holding elite and land holding elite. They tended to be the larger landowners. Although as I just mentioned, there were exceptions—poor school teachers did not own land mostly. But wealth or land alone was insufficient, that is, you could never achieve the same social status without a degree, no matter how much wealth you had. And even though sometimes the lower degree was able to be purchased, the upper two

degrees were never sold by the state. So wealth in itself was looked upon, I suppose you could say, as a means to an end, as a means to other things, lifestyle, education and so on.

10.1.3 *The Elite and Official Ideology*

What is the relationship of this elite then to the official ideology? It's very simple. They were the bearers of the official ideology. They were the bearers of the norms of civilized life. They achieved this by of course participating in the civil service examinations. They would have an intimate acquaintance with the classics. They would be at the top of the range of literacy, that is, they set the tone for what was considered a truly literate person.

The examinations themselves were based precisely upon this ability to manipulate the language. You'd start off in primary education by memorizing the 420,000 characters roughly of the "Four Books and Five Classics" (*sishu wujing*). And then from there, you started practicing, as I said before, the testmanship involved in taking the examinations—writing eight-legged essays. There were handbooks and so on that would help you do this. You would then participate in the examination. Still odds were that you were not going to get even a lower degree, and as you rose up higher, it became more and more difficult to get a degree. Even though you didn't have a degree, an orthodox education meant that you were again a cut above everyone else. Because you knew the way that the world works and you knew the ultimate knowledge that human beings were capable of, you were the natural arbiter of disputes in society, you were the natural arbiter in the same way of fashion and what was proper (the equivalent of Emily Post in what used to be American culture). So this was a position that you attained through study and practice in writing.

Even though the exams themselves were not very practical (that is, you wouldn't necessarily be a better administrator because you could write eight-legged essays well), the entire process did, I think, achieve a culling-out of the more intelligent and hard-working male members of society. It wasn't perfect of course, but there was no question that to get through this system and achieve a degree you had to be very very diligent and you had to have a relatively high level of intelligence.

10.1.4 *The Elite and the State*

This elite, as I said, bore a unique and in a way a peculiar relationship with the state, compared to any other state-society relationship any place else in the world. It meant as I was just saying that the elite were on the one hand dependent upon the state for their very existence as an elite (the state gave out the degrees), so no state, no status for you; on the other hand, once you had achieved this status, then back home in society when you weren't holding office, you were a representative of your home

area/society against the state. So the nature of this elite was Janus-like, the Roman god who was depicted as having a face in both directions.

To a certain extent, that is precisely the position in which it was in. The state itself, through this administrative machinery, was interested in naturally taking the economic surplus from society and sequestering it for its own purposes. Society (and certainly that includes the elites, the local degree holders) generally didn't like this idea of the state taking away the economic surplus. So in this situation, you had the local elites (that is, the degree holders) in local society facing against the state. That is, it was representing the local society to keep, however well it could, some of the economic surplus against the state.

The state, as represented at the local level by the county (*xian*, or *ting*, or *zhou yamen*) office, was in a way viewed by local society as a plague. It came down, it was performing certain functions (it was administering justice, for instance), but its major function was taxation. The local magistrate's bottom line was taxation. To a certain extent, he performed as a tax farmer, as did every other official. That is, the state at the top would not have a specific quota. What the lower officials could get was certainly more than what the state eventually got through taxation. So there was always a way of supplementing one's income by what was essentially a tax-farming operation. The local government of any area, as I said, along with its non-official employees—you know, clerks, runners and other such personnel of the local official office, were something like a plague on local society. And it was the government's attempts to take from society its surplus wealth that was resisted in one fashion or another by local society. The local elite would act on behalf of local society in this regard.

I think that it was this feature of having an elite that was Janus-like, plus the Mandate of Heaven, plus the Chinese ideograph that enabled the Chinese empire to achieve such enormous sizes over long periods of time. There's nothing comparable to that until the modern era when modern technologies allow for such large administrative structures. The trick was to make society do the work of the state. If you had to rely upon the state (that is, the local official, the local *yamen*) to do anything, even arbitrate disputes, everyone knew that was not particularly desirable, that the local *yamen* was the "tiger's mouth." To a certain extent, there was always a chance that all parties would lose in bringing a dispute (a lawsuit) to officialdom to handle. The people who made out best were the lower degree holders acting as brokers or lawyers or lobbyists. So most administrative tasks were handled by society itself led by the same elite that staffed the bureaucracy. What usually kept order in society, however, were other structures, usually kin-structures of some sort in the lineages. For instance, lineages were able to act as administrators of order and justice for the state, which they generally did.

If this were not true, if the local elites (that is, the degree holders) were of some other nature, if they were hereditary aristocrats or something, then this system simply would not work. It would have broken down very quickly. So again, this type of elite is a unique product of Chinese civilization and one of the reasons why the Chinese state continued to replicate itself over time, as well as to administer, to attain such large sizes as it had.

10.2 Administrative System in the Qing

We are now going to go over the basic structure of the imperial administrative system in the Qing in this case, in the last dynasty. It is divided primarily into the administrative structures/offices in the capital, and then outside the capital the hierarchy of other administrative offices and units: provinces, prefectures and so on.

10.2.1 In the Capital

In the capital, the emperor (the throne) itself is at the top. Immediately below it is the *Junjichu*, the Grand Council. Now the Grand Council developed relatively late. It was only made permanent in 1,729 by the Yongzheng Emperor. Its emergence to a certain extent reflected an old pattern. That is, once an administrative office becomes bureaucratized, it becomes awkward and inefficient, it doesn't perform as well, and it can't make immediate decisions and have timely responses to events.

This happened in a Chinese government continuously. That is, the Inner Court, the intimates of the emperor, the informal group would be formalized. And so what essentially happened with this Grand Council is precisely that. There was an informal group of Manchu grandees and high Han officials. The reason that there is a *jun*, there's an army, there is a "military," in the title is that it originated as an informal military structure because you had to have immediate responses to the changes in any military situation. If you went through the bureaucracies, then you would fail because the bureaucracies did not have the same capacity for quick response, for efficient response.

Below the Grand Council is the Grand Secretariat (*Neige*). That was the original group of an office that would operate directly with the throne. However, over time things got ossified and that's what happened with the Grand Secretariat. Within the Grand Secretariat however, there are the traditional Six Boards (six divisions of labor) that appeared in Tang times very early and stayed there: the Board of Rites, the Board of Revenue, the Board of Punishments and so on. These are very well-established bureaucratic divisions of labor.

To go back to the Grand Council in the Qing, the immediate councilors of the emperor invented two very special ways of communicating with the rest of the empire, that is, the "secret memorial" and the "secret edict." There's a line that circumvents the Grand Secretariat and can communicate directly from the Grand Council and the throne to the province or the *daotai* level. In any case, you see the process whereby the throne could send a secret edict (that is, orders of some sort) to a local official at provincial level and no one else in the bureaucracy would know about that order. In the same way, when the provincial governor or whoever above a certain level responded, he would respond in a secret memorial once more; the rest of the bureaucracy had no idea of what was going on. This kind of situation of course strengthens the throne

(the throne's hand) against the bureaucracy. It also of course makes it more efficient and better able to respond to changing events and other emergency situations.

Also in the capital of course you have the emperor's family, and they were of course the only real hereditary aristocrats that existed. Of course the imperial family could influence in one fashion or another the course of government operations, either directly with the emperor or indirectly through other members of the family who were high-ranked officials. However, in general this was not significant. These more significant decisions were made by the Grand Council.

Also in the capital, again another unique Chinese institution was the censorate, in the Qing called the *Duchayuan*. This institution was supposed to perform two functions: one, to remonstrate with the emperor about his failings (that is, it performed traditionally the function of upholding moral standards for the emperor); and two, through the bureaucracy itself. So this is a very old institution that in its earliest forms was along the lines of a way of people protesting injustices being mistreated by officialdom and going directly to the throne (or to the equivalent thereof) to complain and receive justice.

So after it was evolved into its later state, its functions changed somewhat but the idea was still the same. This was an institution that was going to uphold essentially moral standards. That "remonstrating with the emperor over his failings" function more or less died out even in the 14th/fifteenth century. Of course it didn't exist at all during the Yuan Dynasty. When you got to the Qing, it was completely gone. Censors did not dare remonstrate with the emperor. During the Ming, there were several censors who did dare to do so, and they usually met a tragic fate, that is, they were executed. So it is very easy to understand why this function more or less died out.

The censors were usually young zealous officials. When they were searching for malfeasance, which was the same essentially as a moral failing, through the bureaucracy, they had access to all documents, and all offices of all levels of the bureaucracy. And the censorial system also went through all levels. It was based in the capital but it had its own system, whereby it could be the eyes and ears of the emperor. So in the end, this institution, which was supposed to be double-edged—it was supposed to supervise for the emperor the moral failings of the bureaucracy as well as supervise the emperor's moral failings—of course became only the emperor's eyes and ears in the latter part of the imperial era.

10.2.2 *Outside the Capital*

Outside the capital you have the various levels of administrative units and various levels of bureaucrats that head them, that run them.

The first and the largest is the province. The province goes back to the Yuan. After that these provinces remain relatively stable. It is a unit that for the last 800 years or so was somewhat stable in any case. There were no great changes that took place in them. It could be relatively large, depending upon the size of the population.

At one time, it could govern 10–50 million people or more, depending upon the particular province involved. There has been a suggestion by certain scholars that these provincial boundaries were drawn specifically to break up economic networks, marketing systems, so they were drawn to divide society, as it were, and therefore the state had a greater domination over it. This indeed appears to be possibly true not in that there was a calculated intention on the part of the state doing it but it would naturally work out that way, perhaps given the interests of the state.

The next level is the prefecture. The prefecture is administering these smallest units, that is, the county level. We usually translate these units *xian* or *ting* or *zhou* as county, even though there are great differences between this kind of county and British or American counties. There was one official per county. This basically did not change for over 2,000 years. The basic unit of administration where state met society, that is, the county unit, was administered always by just one official. There were some sub-officials of sorts but the only one that was part of the regular bureaucracy was the administering county magistrate. This unit itself was more stable than the prefecture or the province in that there were some counties that did not change at all from the Han and others had similarly long histories without great changes to their borders. Sometimes names were changed, but of all the administrative units, aside from of course the capital itself, it is the county unit that is the most stable.

Its main duties were two: collect taxes—this is in a way the fundamental duty and function of local governmental office; and number two, administer justice, that is to say, keep order, keep the area secure from disorders, from resistance, especially of course armed resistance. In theory, there was a third function that the county magistrate would have and that was upholding the official ideology. Strictly speaking, as the chief clergyman—if you recall, I was saying that there was a sacerdotal side to Chinese officialdom—the chief clergyperson in a county, the county magistrate would sometimes actually fulfill this function by giving lectures on morality. In the end, mainstream morality was still upheld by, propagated by the official bureaucracy. They were very much clergy-like in that respect.

These counties reported to the prefecture; a prefecture might have ten or more counties under it.

10.3 Features of Chinese Bureaucracy

This bureaucracy as a whole, however, had other features that marked it off very clearly from a modern-style bureaucracy.

10.3.1 *Insufficient Salary*

The first was the matter of salary. Despite the best efforts of the emperors, there was no way in which an official could maintain the lifestyle appropriate to his rank without non-salary income. People were not really expected to live on their salaries. This might be regarded in a way as corruption, but it was more or less expected that the official would supplement his official salary with other ways of gaining income. It was after all necessary to maintain the lifestyle that society expected a person of rank to lead. The official would be given the right to collect money, that is, as I said, it was something like a tax farmer. He would be able to keep the surplus. The actual taxes paid sometimes would be two to even three times the amount that was actually received by the state. This was as I said the rule rather than the exception.

10.3.2 *Morally Superior*

Theoretically, a bureaucrat (a degree holder), because he was morally superior, was above considerations of profit. He would not act like a mean person, a *Xiaoren*. The Confucian official after all was supposed to be morally superior, a *Junzi*, and therefore did not, as the *Xiaoren* did, live only for profit. The superior person theoretically does what is right because it is right. So as I noted before, the official was a generalist; he was not a specialist. He was not a technocrat of any sort. He hired other people to do that. He himself was supposed to make moral judgments. That was his “area of expertise.” This of course is quite different from a modern bureaucracy.

10.3.3 *Punishable for Mistakes*

Another area, one that influenced the course of events very much throughout history, is that the local official was responsible for untoward events within his jurisdiction. It might not be directly traced to any actions by him, but at some level—again going back to the theory that a superior man rules by the power of his virtue in the same way that the emperor does—no matter what happened, that official would be responsible. So even though it was an act of god (a natural event) over which he had no control, or the emergence of some disorder over which he had no control, it was still at some level regarded as his fault.

This is of course a direct parallel to the way that the emperor was held accountable for the running of *Tianxia*, of all under heaven in general. That is, if there were untoward events to some degree, especially odd events in nature, then they were regarded as at some level the responsibility of the emperor. This meant that the bureaucracy—we’ll talk about the nineteenth century—was very timid and it did not want to talk about what was really going on. If there was no good news to report, then

nothing would be said. If there were some problems developing locally, they would in general not be reported upward until the local official had no choice. This meant in turn that there was always a gulf between what was understood about the particular situation or event in the capital and what the officials on the spot understood. So this gap sometimes was responsible for untoward events especially in the nineteenth century.

10.3.4 Corruption

So, was this bureaucracy efficient? Yes, actually it performed pretty well, despite what we were calling corruption and so on. Actually there were certain limitations on how much an official could take. Local officials, for instance, had to have the local populace there producing. If the tax burden got so bad that people simply could not live, they would move out, so the local official would have nothing to collect. That was a practical limitation on what could be considered as depredations on society. Then there were ideological limitations. The local official (county magistrate) was known as the *Fumuguan*, the mother-and-father official. That is to say, his relationship to the people of his jurisdiction was that of parent and child. He was always looking out for the interests of local society. If he took too much, this would essentially affect his prestige and face. At the time he was in office or later, especially frugal or non-corrupt officials were then recorded in local gazetteers as such. In other words, they would go down in history for their relatively incorruptible behavior, their efficient and good government.

10.4 Bureaucracy in Nineteenth Century

So the system in general worked pretty well. The Qing bureaucracy was relatively remarkable in that it could operate efficiently and after all it even did well in defending the empire against imperialism. Of course the imperialists won all the wars, but in the end the bureaucracy was at every term trying to thwart further penetration by the imperial powers. By the nineteenth century though, there was very clearly an enormous pressure at the apex of the system and at the base of the system after the three great emperors of the Qing, the Kangxi Emperor, the Yongzheng Emperor and the Qianlong Emperor. The emperors were such a great talented lot, and this meant that a less than able emperor who was over-worked, plus having incomplete information about any local situation because of this feature of timidity that was natural to the system, would be in a difficult situation. He would have to make quick decisions on things without sufficient information, and perhaps not having sufficient talent, administrative talent to do so. So the nineteenth century was not ideal, as far as the emperors were concerned.

At the base of the system, as I said, by the nineteenth century, population had tripled and soon would almost quadruple what it had been any time before in Chinese history. This meant that everyone's survival strategies were getting sharper. This meant that there was more squeeze, more corruption at the base of the system, because there was essentially less for everyone. There was a general pressure on everyone. Basically they were getting poorer very rapidly even in one generation. There was a perceptible decline. So this meant that the local officials were more rapacious than usual at precisely the time that society was least able to provide for the rapacious appetite of the official.

10.5 Class Base of Chinese Bureaucracy

10.5.1 Feudal Bureaucracy?

This system over all defies analysis.

Well, it's clearly not a feudal system in the Western sense. That kind of system would require hereditary aristocracy which did not exist. Japan would be a true feudal society, but late imperial China certainly wasn't. Another term that has been thrown around is a "feudal bureaucracy." But of course that term in itself is an oxymoron. That is, feudal hereditary aristocracy and bureaucracy are two ends, two opposites at the ends of one spectrum. One would be at the one end and one at the other. Bureaucrats were replaceable. They could not serve in their own areas and so they could not achieve any independent power base or permanence, so the whole system was in a continuous process of de-feudalization because of that.

10.5.2 Oriental Despotism?

Another term that was bandied about and very popular in the West in the 1950s and 1960s.

There was a famous purveyor of this concept, Karl Wittfogel. He was extremely popular in the 1950s, 1960s. And I suppose he started being less popular later. His analysis was that certain societies in the world were "hydraulic societies" (that is, control of water), which had to be over a large area and controlled by a single authority. Therefore, it led naturally to despotism of one sort or another. So ancient Egypt, as well as China, would be hydraulic societies, and therefore examples of oriental despotism. Again, it doesn't make too much sense because in many areas of China you cannot have large-scale water control. In much of North China of course you cannot because there's not sufficient water, there is not the same reliance upon irrigation. That would be true of the South. And many other areas of China, which in

the end, because of its diversity and size, would be more comparable to all of Europe than a single country, cannot be accurately described as an Oriental Despotism.

10.5.3 Gentry-Based Elite?

Another term that people have used was a “gentry-based elite.” This term “gentry” derives from the English “landed gentry.” Of course they were the big shots in a local scene in rural areas, and that’s why this term, although not very suitable to the Chinese case, has been used to describe the *shidafu jieji*, the degree holder elite. In the British or English case however, you were a gentry man because you had land; in the Chinese case, for the most part, you were a gentry man and then had land. In other words, the relationship is reversed. The requirement in the Chinese case is that you first achieved gentry status and then you became a landowner. In the English case, it’s precisely the opposite: you gained gentry status through owning land. So, even this gentry-based elite society isn’t too accurate a term.

So this is unavoidable. Perhaps there’s no good way of describing Chinese society all that accurately because Western languages themselves are built upon the European experience and not the Chinese experience. So some of these terms will never be quite accurate in analyzing traditional pre-modern Chinese society.

Chapter 11

Stratification of Late Imperial Society



11.1 Chinese Society Not a Feudal Society

By late imperial times (by, say, the 15th/sixteenth century), Chinese rural society was decidedly not a feudal society in the Western sense. Not only there were no hereditary aristocrats aside from the imperial family (there were no hereditary classes in that sense), but agriculture everywhere had become commercially driven, market-driven, and there were more people producing more cash crops for the market. This was of course truer in some areas than others, in the cores of macro-regions, the valley floors, the place where all resources eventually collected, that is, population, raw materials and so on. And they would be naturally the most economically developed and the most commercially driven.

Lineages, because they were corporate entities, could maintain over long periods of time a certain status. There are certain cases of this that people have studied: certain lineages would hold a dominant position in a particular county for a long period of time. However, the individual branches of that lineage or the individual nuclear families like the rest of the society continued to go up and down. That is, there was no assured higher status for all members of the lineage. The lineage could still use its corporate resources to favor the lineage overall by investing in education for certain people.

11.2 Stratification Related to Roles

The top of this society is, no great surprise, the scholar/bureaucrat, and these criteria of social status that I am about to launch into all have the scholar/bureaucrat at the very top, except for the fifth criterion. These criteria are listed here. Aside from these five specific criteria, we could say something about the importance of roles in society as a whole.

 Knowledge/skill/education

 Responsibility

 Wealth/property

 Participation in *li* and lifestyle

 Age/generation

11.2.1 *Manual Labor vs. Mental Labor*

There are certain roles that could be divided into two classes. I have already mentioned one when we were discussing classical thought and Mencius. That is, there is a division basic to Chinese society between the mind laborers and the body laborers. *Gu yue: huo laoxin, huo laoli, laoxinzhe zhiren, laolizhe zhiyuren*. Therefore, it is said (or I say) that some labor with their minds, some with their bodies; those who labor with their minds govern, and those who labor with their bodies are governed. So, people are different. In the natural course of events, people would fall into one of these two roles. Both types are of course needed to make a society; they are both quite necessary.

The two roles, moreover, are not ascribed characteristics. That is to say, especially in the neo-Confucian concept of human beings, man is perfectible. That is to say, individuals can change. This notion that individual can improve/perfect himself is one of the things that leads naturally to the civil service examination system. So, at birth there is no way of telling whether someone is going to be a *laoxinzhe* (a mind worker) or a *laolizhe* (a body worker), in the same way that there is no way of telling at birth whether someone is going to be a morally superior person (*a Junzi*) or a morally inferior person (a mean person, *a Xiaoren*).

11.2.2 *Scholars, Farmers, Artisans and Merchants/Businessmen*

Now aside from this basic division, there's the official one, which sometimes reflected reality but very often did not. The official ranking, according to occupation, was "*shi, nong, gong, shang*," scholars on top as usual, after them farmers, after them artisans, people who labored with their bodies but in some other way they worked on materials, and at the bottom merchants. In actuality of course, commercial activity was sometimes looked down upon, but the actual status of merchants, if they were successful and rich, could definitely not be on the bottom of the social status scale.

11.3 Basic Criteria of Stratification

Now I am going to present these five criteria of social status one by one and discuss each of them. I would note at this point that all of them related to the concept of prestige or “face.” That is to say, in certain respects all resources of whatever kind were interchangeable. And as you could use wealth to achieve another and you could use social position to achieve wealth, you could use education to achieve various ends. In the end though, the concept of prestige would be in certain ways the final goal of all of these strategies—exchanges of resources, one for the other. In the end, the only thing that seems to be inevitably in competition was face/prestige, or in other words, social status. Wealth alone was never enough to ensure social status, although it could be used as a means to other ends, such as education, lifestyle or participation in the *li*.

I would further note that it is not just the individual who achieved a certain status judged by these criteria, but again because of the factor of familialism, an individual’s achievement would reflect on the prestige of the entire family, including those already dead and those not yet born. It’s an unbroken whole through time, and therefore any achievement would reflect not just on the single individual actually making these achievements but then the entire family upward and downward through time.

11.3.1 Knowledge/Skill/Education

The first of these criteria is education, in a way the *summum bonum*, the highest of goods. Much is made of this value these days because of the astounding success of the East Asians (that is, Confucian cultural areas people around the world) in education. That is, it is through education that one’s life chances are locked. It is through education that one’s family achieves prestige or does not. And this traditional stress on education obviously remains to this day. Again compared to other cultures, it is Sinic culture that puts education in this central position.

At the top of this hierarchy of these criteria of course is none other than the scholar/bureaucrat. That is to say, the scholar/bureaucrat had a whole lot of knowledge. In fact, the amount of knowledge theoretically was reflected in the level of degree. And so this was also hierarchized within scholar officialdom: the higher the degree, the better, therefore the more knowledge. The factor that would make the scholar/official at the top of the education/skill/knowledge hierarchy would be that they had orthodox knowledge, they knew the classics, they were bearers of the central values of the civilization, and so that kind of knowledge is superior to other kinds of knowledge.

Overall, knowledge that requires literacy is valued over those skills and other kinds of knowledge that do not require literacy. For instance, a geomancer and a fortune teller: the geomancer had to have literate knowledge for that, whereas the fortune teller did not have to be literate. So even though on the surface the two looked like,

well, of some kind of the equal rank, actually no, the geomancer would have more social prestige than a mere fortune teller. A herbal medicine doctor, that is, physician of herbal medicine, would rank over a midwife, even though their responsibilities were equal, that is, you have all life in your hands, you are responsible for it, again because the herbal medicine doctor had to be literate, had to have acquired literate knowledge, versus the midwife, who had only non-verbal knowledge/skill. This again reflected the point that I started with at the beginning that the ideograph, the written language, was in a privileged position over the spoken language.

Now that doesn't mean there weren't similar rankings within illiterate knowledge or levels of skill. A skillful farmer of great experience who really had a knowledge of a particular production process, say, the raising of livestock, would have greater prestige than someone who didn't have any particular skill, who was a plain tiller without any particular skill. At the bottom of this hierarchy as usual was the illiterate day laborer, the unskilled manual laborer.

11.3.2 Responsibility

The second criterion on our chart is responsibility: the more responsibility, the greater the social prestige, the higher the social status. Once again it's this scholar/bureaucrat who is responsible for government, who has the most responsibility, and at this scale once more they are ranked at the top.

Within the scholar/bureaucrat group, the higher the office—that would be concerned with a larger territory of jurisdiction, the more responsibility for more people and therefore the greater social prestige that would be attached to that. Any kind of responsibility, however, was qualified so that you might have in a village someone who didn't have any knowledge of any sort, was illiterate, but was a public actor, someone who went around organizing the opera performances for a local festival, or someone of that sort that took a public role, gained considerable social prestige. So in this ranking the more active one was, the greater the social prestige.

This is a perfect parallel: the household head of a larger household would have more responsibility than the household head of a smaller household, and therefore the household head of this larger household would have greater prestige. The larger the group of people one was responsible for in some way, the greater the social prestige. So I was talking about the public actor who would go around, say, organizing public entertainments for festivals. If that was done at a higher level, not just in a village, but in a market town for a bigger festival or in a county seat, then that kind of public action—performance of the public role—would be proportionately greater in responsibility and so the actor would be ranked higher.

11.3.3 Property/Wealth

The next criterion is wealth. As I've said, wealth alone might be transformed into something else of higher value. It was a means to a lifestyle of more prestige, or of education that would help the family if the educated person in whom the family invested was successful in his career. Wealth alone, although always better than not having any, was not the goal in society as a whole, in rural society as a whole.

Within wealth, there were hierarchies. That is, the quality of wealth/property counted as well. Overall of course wealth is quantifiable and the more, the better. The more wealth, the higher the rank, according to this criterion. However, within that the most valuable type of wealth was land. Land was permanent, land could be left to posterity, and therefore compared to other forms of wealth, various other kinds of property, land had greater prestige, had greater value in this scale. Within land, paddy land would be valued higher than dry farming land; within dry farming land, flat, relatively flat land would be better, would be higher-ranked than mountain land; and overall agricultural land would be ranked higher than nonagricultural land. So within the single type of wealth, that is, land, there were rankings of quality.

The next best kind of property to have, at least in terms of social prestige, would be cultural products, such as paintings and calligraphy, antiques of one sort or another. Of course the more ancient, the better. Cash, that is, money, currency of silver, in itself was not so high-ranking, but once more it could be transformed into something higher-ranking, into something with greater social prestige. You could buy land with it; you could buy cultural products with it. In itself of course you could not do too much with it. It did not reflect very well, compared to other kinds of property, on the owners. Nevertheless, the more, the better of any kind of wealth: the more the wealth, the greater the prestige, the higher the social status ranking, according to this criterion of wealth.

As I said before, there was a good deal of overlapping of the gentry elite (the scholar/bureaucrats) and the land-holding elite. And it was very often the case that the higher the rank of the official, the higher the degree of the degree holder, the more wealth, and the more land, or whatever. At the bottom of the hierarchy was again exactly the same type of person who was at the bottom of the first two hierarchies as well. That was the landless manual laborer, day laborer. He had no education; he was illiterate, he worked with his body only. He has to be supervised in working, so he didn't have any responsibility. And he had no wealth to speak of. He didn't have his own land. So these rankings come out remarkably similar. It was always the scholar/bureaucrat who, according to these criteria, was on the top, and it was always the illiterate single person without family perhaps at the bottom.

I wouldn't say tenant, because tenantry became very complicated in highly commercialized areas. Say, in the lower Yangtze areas, you'd have tenants who were also landlords at the same time because land was completely commercialized. There was a market in land, and therefore becoming a tenant didn't necessarily mean that you actually went out and worked on the land of somebody else's. Across the

board, being a tenant would not be particularly bad, especially if the other criteria were higher.

11.3.4 *Participation in the Li and Lifestyle*

Then, next criterion is participation in the *li* or lifestyle. In general, leisure ranked very highly in the same way as I said of the conspicuous consumption of bound feet. That is, we are so well-off that we can cripple our women who now can't walk very well or do really heavy labor; we are just beyond all of that; we don't need it. Manifestations of leisure, especially above all nonparticipation in manual labor, was very significant. As I said, it was the body laborers who supported the mind laborers, and who were governed by them. So avoidance of physical labor itself was an important aspect of general lifestyle. You got considerable prestige by being a leisured person.

To a certain extent, the other aspect of lifestyle was how you performed the various other social roles that you had. A concrete example would be filiality. A filial person is perhaps one of the highest bits of praise than anyone would have in the countryside. That is to say, if the *li* as I said was idealized social roles, or the appropriate behavior for a certain role and status at any one time, then performing those roles would be considered as participation in the *li*. Social role performance was of great social significance, and redounded to the social prestige of the people who performed that well, so the Confucian ideal is "*fu qi fu, zi qi zi*"—let the fathers be fathers and let the sons be sons; let them perform, in other words, their proper social roles, their roles appropriate to their status.

As we said at the beginning though, *li* has a broad range of meanings. It can mean a specific performance in society or specific performance in a ceremony. And in a way, it is basically the same kind of behavior. Your behavior is appropriate to your role and status, so life is one great big ceremony in certain respects. Now if we speak of ceremonies themselves, then the same kind of the social prestige is attached to them. In the usual case, of course it's the scholars/bureaucrats who were the imitable ones in terms of *li*. They, moreover, were the experts in knowing how should be done.

Now wealth was a determining factor in how far you could go in following the *li*. A high-ranking wealthy official or scholar official (if he wasn't in office), would have a funeral that would punctiliously observe all of the details of the *li*. For funerals, it would be also lavish in the number of clergy of Taoist, Buddhist sort that participated. That is, as usual the more, the better. That doesn't mean, however, that the ordinary farmer could not also participate in the *li*. It was all appropriate to the level of the person usually and as I said determined by the wealth of that person. That does mean, however, that in order to participate more fully in the *li*, to have a better funeral or wedding, people would not ruin their families by going into debt.

So this in the end is a very interesting phenomenon that once more it is a prestige market, so I can turn cash into participation in the *li*, in the sense of ceremony. And even if I don't have that much wealth, it is more important to me to gain the social

prestige of having a proper funeral, or a proper wedding, or proper other types of ceremony. So, in weddings, the more lavish and more punctiliously they observed the specific details of the *Li*, the better. That is, everyone wanted to approximate the perfect model. The closer to that perfect model, the better. So in the case of weddings, it would be the prenuptial series of gifts, the number of tables of guests and so on. In the case of funerals, you'd have again an internal ranking. If for instance you couldn't afford any ceremony at all, you couldn't afford to organize a funeral cortege, you could only have the immediate family attending to the affair, but you had a wooden coffin that was a proper burial instrument, then you'd still be regarded as having considerable status, compared to having just a cloth wrapping. That you had any kind of ceremony at all was better than having absolutely no ceremony. To have some kind of funeral arrangement (that is, the body being properly cared for, having a coffin) would be actions of considerable prestige. Even if you just had cloth wrappings, it would still be regarded as perhaps the lowest level of participating in the *Li*.

Once more at the bottom of this ranking, according to this criterion, it was the landless manual laborer who in effect might not do anything, might be separated from his or her family and might not observe the *li* at all, would not even go through the motions of observing the *li*. Again, the ranking is the same: the punctilious observers of the *Li* (of the ceremonial *Li*) would be the scholar/bureaucrats, and the propertyless illiterate manual laborer would be at the bottom.

11.3.5 Age/Generation

The fifth criterion is age or generation, *beifen*. Now as we said again, at the beginning discussing Chinese thought, you can trace the basic principal of gerontocracy—the older, the better—directly to the oracle bones. That is, the older, the better was a standard already then. According to this criterion of course, women would be able to rise to a considerable rank, if they simply outlived the males. Once again, in the *Dreams of the Red Chamber*, the head of the Jia establishment is a woman. Because of her age, she was older, and therefore better. I would add that of course there is chronological age and then generational age, which might be very different. So your generational designation, your *beifen*, might be at variance with chronological age. So you'd have a kind of conflict between the two. That is, so and so is fifty years old, I am thirty years old, but I am, according to my generational designation, older than him. So chronological age would be tempered with the generational age factor.

These five criteria, as I said, were remarkably consistent in determining social ranking throughout society from the very top to the very bottom over such an enormous amount of territory and within such an enormous number of people. This in itself is something unparalleled anywhere else in world history and once more is one of those unique features of Chinese civilization.

Part II

Chapter 12

Sino-European Relations



12.1 From Western Europe to East Asia Contact

We are going to discuss Sino-European relations from the beginning, from Roman times to the time of the Opium War. This will provide a larger perspective in locating the Opium War in the overall Sino-European relations.

As we all know, there was a Roman word for China, meaning “the land of silk.” There were overland trade routes, the so-called Silk Road that ran from Chang’an roughly across Central Asia through Asia Minor and then by sea to Italy. That was the first contact that the European world and the Sinic world had. It’s a path of trade. Now these goods passed through many hands before they actually arrived in Europe. After Roman times, this trade ceased.

After Roman times, among other things, the lands to the east were converted Islam. Islam and Christendom would be at odds for these several centuries, with the Arabs pressing hard on Eastern and Western Europe. Part of Spain was an Arab land; sometimes Sicily and Southern Italy were parts of Arab lands. So there was an ongoing conflict between the two religious communities. This meant the old trade route had to go through these Islamic lands and therefore in fact all of Europe was cut off from contact with East Asia. There were always legends in Christendom about Christian kings to the Far East, in other words, rumors of a Christian king somewhere in definite Eastern regions. Actually there were some Christian kings practicing Nestorian Christianity in Central Asia, and some of these nomadic kingdoms were in effect Christian communities, Christian states.

So we have less and less contact because of the obstacles, basically Islam, that is intervening in Sino-European contact. Then how did Marco Polo in the thirteenth century get to China? How did his family get to China to trade? It was because of the Yuan Dynasty. It was because of the Mongols. At that time, the Yuan Empire stretched from China here northward across the steppe into Eastern Europe. It was all one great Pax Mongolica. This would allow travelers and traders to travel with one “passport,” as it were, from one end of the continent to the other. So there were visitors to China beginning from Europe in this period after Marco Polo and before

the Jesuits. There were several European visitors to China who actually wrote about it. They were merchants. Actually several more Italian merchants who had gone to China and returned and made a record of their travels in China, but at that point no one was reading these books. They were more or less ignored.

It was through missionaries of the sort, such as Mateo Ricci, Michele Ruggieri, Adam Schall and other members of the Jesuit Order that Sino-European contacts were re-established in the sixteenth century. To a certain extent, you see the Jesuit Order as a response to the rise of Protestantism. It is a very militant order, a part of the Counter-Reformation in response to the Protestant Reformation.

Let's back up a bit and look again at the entire Eurasian Continent. I have been speaking previously of almost rhythmic explosions from the steppe in usually this direction and in fact the last one of these occurred in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries in the form of the Ottoman Turks. The Ottoman Turks continually threatened Europe. They went to the gates of Vienna, which was the capital of the Holy Roman Empire, and in the essence blocked further traffic trade between Western Europe and East Asia.

Now what was so special about the trade with East Asia? It was the spices. This really had little to do with China and more to do with this region, the primary producers of spices. But why were spices so important to Western Europe at this time? To a certain extent, the rush to spice-producing areas was similar to, in modern times, the rush to oil fields, because the spices had enormous economic significance. What were they used for? Essentially, they were used as oil is supplying energy. Of course, the economies of Europe were based upon muscle power, right? But of course muscles have to be fed. Spices were used to first, preserve food, and then secondly, to make not so well-preserved food and ill-tasting food more palatable. So to a certain extent, it was a source of energy in that it was used for preparing the food stuffs that would be the source of energy for this muscle-power economy. I know that sounds a bit far-fetched, but the urgency with which the Western Europe was seeking trade route to the spice field was, in a way, quite similar to the demand for oil in modern times.

12.2 Rise of Nation-State in Western Europe

In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, as I mentioned, the last explosion from the steppe thrust toward Europe. In the sixteenth century, this campaign of conquest of the Ottoman Turks slowed down. What happened, in response, in Western Europe, was extremely interesting. That is, the coastal parts of Europe, which means England, the Netherlands, France, Spain and Portugal, started organizing power in a new way. It was going to be the nation-state. It was a way of mobilizing resources on the scale and with the efficiency that did not exist prior to that time. That's one of the aspects of what went on in the sixteenth century. The second activity partially dependent

upon this organization of proto nation-states was a kind of explosion of the Western littoral itself outward, so that they went exploring. They started trying to get to spice fields in the East to get around the Ottoman Turks.

12.2.1 *Portuguese Expansion*

The first European quasi- or total-country to do this is Portugal, and it is Portugal that developed the naval technologies necessary for long voyages of that sort first. Portugal was, for the latter part of the fifteenth century and the early sixteenth century, engaged in a process of getting around Africa. As it went, it was establishing trade stations, which would not be colonies at this stage, but simply areas that would be used for trade with the area in which it was located. It depended upon what the goods were of that particular area, as to what the trade would be. Before they got completely around Africa, while they were still going down the west coast of Africa, they set up slave trade center, as it were. When they got to India, they started trading other substances and goods, and created a true colony in Goa, which was in the Indian Subcontinent and became an outright colony of Portugal.

The Portuguese continued to go eastward, and in 1516, one Portuguese ship under the captain Rafael Perestrelo reached Canton. The next year, 1517, Portuguese governor of Malacca and Thomas Pirez together went to Canton and established a presence for Portugal. They set themselves into the tribute system and more or less were allowed to trade freely. The Chinese called the Portuguese “*Folangji*” which was an approximation of an Arabic term “*Feringhi*,” which was in turn derived from the word “Franks,” because some of the crusaders who reached the Holy Land in the Middle East were Franks. So, that word remained in Arabic and was eventually communicated to China so that when the first Westerners appeared in China, they were called essentially Franks. This was not the first time that strange-looking Westerners possibly with blue eyes or blond hair had arrived. During the Yuan, as we know, Marco Polo served as an official. He was a part of a category called *semu*, colored eyes. And it was recognized that this was a different looking type of person, but it did not interfere with his serving with the Yuan court. So we have a kind of counter explosion made by the Portuguese or the Portuguese in the lead—getting to China and starting trade, and setting themselves into the local situation, the local tribute system.

In 1535, not that long afterward, they, through various methods, got official permission to drive their cargoes, in other words, to unload and rest on a small island called Shangchuan at the time. They agreed to pay certain rents, taxes on their boats and cargoes in the trade aspects. And that’s the situation that existed until 1557, when they took over governance of the small quasi-island of Macao. Now this could be considered the first outright expression of European imperialist expansion in China. The Ming did not protest this move. All they did was, a few years later, a decade or so later, building a wall across the isthmus so that there was a control of

traffic between Macao and the mainland. That was basically it. There is no formal protestation of the occupation of what was, after all, a very small parcel of land.

The Portuguese did very well in East Asian waters, that is, they did turn a profit in their operations. One of the ways in which they did this happened to be inserting themselves in the trade between Japan and the Chinese Empire. That is, they became the carriers of goods back and forth between Japan and China. They were able to do this because the problem of Japanese pirates. They were all over this area at this point. Japanese were not allowed to participate in the tribute system any more. That means that trade with Japan was forbidden. The Portuguese, being a third party, then took up that trade. They traded Chinese silks for Japanese metals, silver coins, swords and other such goods. So they were doing quite well. They got there first and therefore got the most profits. And Portuguese, as I might have mentioned before, becomes the *lingua franca* of the maritime world at this point, precisely because they're all over the place.

12.2.2 The Netherlands' Expansion

That doesn't mean, however, that they were going to be alone there for very long, because they were soon followed by other countries, quasi-countries in Western Europe in the littoral. The first on the heels, as it were, of the Portuguese were the Dutch, the Netherlands. Now they were a Protestant power, that is, they took the Protestant side in these various conflicts over religion, and therefore were cut off by the Catholic countries (the Iberian powers, for instance) from trade with the East and especially the trade in the spices area. So the Dutch arrived and went directly to the source of spices, which I just indicated was really in this area. They focused on what is now Indonesia, and eventually those islands became a colony of the Dutch. They also drove the Portuguese out of this carrying trade between China and Japan. They replaced them. Part of the reason is that the Japanese in 1620 prohibited Christianity. Therefore, Portugal which was very much a missionary-encouraging power, was now looked on with disfavor, and therefore were easily displaced by the Dutch, who did not want to talk about any religious matters. They put that aside in favor of trade concerns. So, to some degree, the Dutch in the seventeenth century displaced the Portuguese, not completely, but for a few decades, they dominated European power in East Asian waters. It was during this period, for instance, that they occupied the southern part of Taiwan. They built a fort at Anping which still exists, and were not expelled from the island of Taiwan until Koxinga (*guoxingye*), the late Ming loyalist, drove them out.

12.2.3 *England*

The next significant power to reach the East and establish trade stations along the way was England, which was at this point a Protestant power too, sometimes in league with the Dutch, the other Protestant power, chief marine power. The British established trade stations in India, especially in this area of Bengal. They established a presence and started trading there. In 1635, before they could establish themselves in Canton as a trading power, they were defeated in a sea battle in the South China Sea here by the Portuguese. And their defeat in this sea battle more or less stopped them from developing further in this direction. Instead, they were forced to concentrate on India. So they were essentially going to build a colony in India rather than get to Canton. Eventually of course they did get to Canton in 1659, but because the Portuguese still controlled Macao and because Macao was the only place where anyone could stay from Europe coming to East Asia, the Portuguese were not completely eliminated from the game at this point.

In the middle of the seventeenth century, 1657, the Mughal power (that is, the controlling power in northern India) started essentially coming apart, got very shaky. The British on the coast had been trading with inland areas for cotton cloth mostly, but now there was a problem of security of transport to get those goods from the interior to the coast. It became very iffy. So Josiah Child, one of these early colonialist administrators, suggested to the East India Company that all of these countries be not involved themselves, not the governments of the countries; that they be represented by joint stock companies. So each of these powers (littoral powers from Europe) had joint stock companies. They usually had the name “East India” at the beginning. So there was a British East India Company, a Dutch one and so on. So the British East India Company followed Josiah Child’s suggestion and simply conquered the entire area to ensure that the goods would get from the interior to the trade stations on the coast. They, in essence, created a colony through armed force. However, in order to do that, they had to borrow considerable capital. They borrowed a great amount, in fact, from the British monarchy, from the British crown, about 18 million taels—a considerable sum.

Now their problem (that is, East India Company’s problem) would forever be after making this investment in India, to find something that they could extract from India to pay back the British crown for this loan. Toward the end of the seventeenth century, the British did establish themselves as a trading power. They had their own offices, factories as they were called, and started trading, as everyone else did, for certain Chinese goods: silks, ceramics and other things, rhubarb and other luxury items of one sort or another. They, at this point, were not the dominant world power that they would become in the eighteenth century. They were just one among many.

What happened in the middle of the eighteenth century? It was essentially a revolution of taste in Britain. Around the middle of the eighteenth century, tea was introduced to the British market. Up until that time, the beverage of choice of the upper classes was coffee or chocolate. There were houses that served coffee and chocolate that catered to the upper classes in the urban Britain. What happened through the

middle of the eighteenth century was that tea exceeded coffee and chocolate as the most common drink. There was a massive shift to tea. This habit of drinking tea very quickly stretched downward into the masses of society so that the entire society was now drinking tea at a very great rate. This presented the East India Company with a very valuable opportunity, because they would go to Canton, buy Chinese tea and sell it back in Britain at the considerable profit.

The problem was as usual: what could they get out of India to pay for the tea? Well, they ended up using silver specie, that is, silver bullion because no matter what they tried, it didn't seem to succeed in the South China market, in selling in Canton. There were few areas that sold for other European countries as well that were extremely limited in their market. There were mechanical devices, spring-driven devices, clocks and such that were developed in Europe at this time and that China had not developed. So this kind of product, called "singsong," at the same time was sold to the Chinese, but not really in too great numbers. And the market for such things was still quite limited. So the British tried various other things as well.

It was during the eighteenth century that British Industrial Revolution got into high gear, and the Lancashire power mills were turning out English woolen cloth at a great rate. But you couldn't really sell woolen cloth in South China. People there would much prefer to wear silk, not woolens. They tried Indian cotton, something that they could indeed extract from India to pay for the tea in Canton. And that worked for a short period, but very soon the merchants of the Yangtze Valley discovered that they could ship cotton along the coast to the Canton market and sold it for a cheaper price than the British could grow it and then transport it and sell it in Canton. So the British are undercut. There were several other things that they tried. Indigo was a seller for a while. That market didn't continue because there's invention of another kind of blue dye, Prussian blue. So indigo didn't go anywhere. In the end, toward the end of the eighteenth century, the British were still wondering what they would extract from India in order to pay for the tea.

12.3 Canton System

The attitude of Manchus toward the sea and the seacoast was always one of suspicion. They had in their past trouble with the seacoast. They had *guoxingye* (Koxinga) in collusion with the locals, making difficulties there. There were Chinese bandits who were colluding with Japanese pirate raids along the coast. And so the Manchu attitude toward Canton and this area was similarly suspicious. For instance, during the time of Koxinga, for certain portions of the coast, the government simply moved the population inland for several miles to keep them from making contact with this external sea power, as it were. After all, they were an inner-Asian power. They were always concerned traditionally with this area and mistrusted the sea. That's the background.

During the eighteenth century while the British were becoming addicted to tea, the Qing government was interested in limiting the foreign presence precisely because of

this attitude of suspicion. So through the 1740s and 1750s, certain regulations were laid down that resulted in 1760 in a set system, usually called the Canton System. That is, all foreign trade was limited to Canton. There were no Chinese officials involved in this trade. Rather, the state appointed certain monopoly merchants, the *cohong* (in the local pronunciation of the characters for “公行”), and a chief among them that became responsible for the behavior of foreigners as well as for the trade itself. Now the British traders were interested primarily in making money, were talking about the East India Company and went along with it for the most part.

There were other regulations, however, that were a bit more irksome to the East India Company. For one, they were absolutely forbidden to make contact with any Chinese official, that is, everything had to go through the *cohong*. There was no opportunity at all to ever get around the *cohong* and contact the bureaucracy itself. Two, and this was of course understandable, they were forbidden to bring women or firearms into Canton for the trading season. And they were forbidden to have warships in the inner waters of the Canton estuary. They were also limited in sumptuary by sumptuary laws. They could not ride in a covered boat or in a sedan chair because that should give them airs that they should not have. They were not allowed to buy Chinese books or learn Chinese. This probably did not irritate them very much.

And the tariff that they would pay was always a covert secret. It was never out in the open because the *cohong* and the head of it, the *Hoppo*, was in a way a kind of tax farmer. That organization, rather than the state itself, would collect these duties on goods.

So this entire situation through the eighteenth century to a certain extent created some dissatisfaction among the British traders there. But it wasn't very magnitude to cause the government to take action. Besides, it wasn't until the very last part of the eighteenth century after the British won the major war with the French that the British became the dominant European power. And so it was not until much later 1793 that the British government at that point, being secure in its dominant position in Europe, decided to send to the emperor a tribute mission.

12.4 British Diplomatic Missions to China

12.4.1 Macartney's Mission

The British mission of 1793 was led by Lord Macartney and was a considerable undertaking. It was quite large. There were six hundred cases of gifts, including scientific instruments and so on. The mission would have its audience with the emperor, not in Beijing but rather in the summer capital. Actually it took place outside the imperial yurt rather than in the palace. So this mission went up the Grand Canal to North China. This afforded the members of the mission to gather some impressions of China. It was not that they went directly to the capital, had their audience and left again. They spent some time traveling in China.

The mission was supposed to raise the usual demands to increase trade. Britain was a trading power and therefore wanted to have, aside from Canton, other entrepôts open for trade. The British also wanted to, perhaps out of ignorance, have the Chinese join the European world in their system of international relations that had been basically settled by the Treaty of Westphalia in the seventeenth century. And of course this was totally unrealistic. There were other demands. Macartney was instructed to try to gain access to some place, where the British might stay in the off season and their ships might be repaired and so on, near a tea or silk producing area. Now we all know that eventually the British would indeed get precisely that. The course of the mission actually went relatively smoothly. The Qianlong Emperor, celebrating his significant birthday at the time, was in generally good spirits. And for the most part, the actual exchanges between the mission and the court went well. The problem came when Macartney submitted these requests that the mission was supposed to be all about.

The Emperor Qianlong replied in two edicts. The most famous passage in these edicts is this. He was refusing to increase trade essentially. This is what he had to say about it:

We possess all things. I set no value on objects, strength or ingenious and have no use for your countries' manufactures. [...] It behooves you, O King, to respect my sentiments and to display even greater devotion and loyalty in the future, so that, by perpetual submission to our Throne, you may secure peace and prosperity for your country thereafter.

Now this statement of course is reflective of this millennia-old assumption of the universal kingship as well as universal Popeship. That is to say, by submission to the empire, your country will have prosperity and peace. Now the implication is that there is something to do with the running of the cosmos that will allow the country to enjoy prosperity. So this statement is often taken as an indicative of the attitude of the Chinese government toward waterborne barbarians and their demands for trade and is also an expression of the millennial-old universal kingship.

12.4.2 Amherst Mission

So in the end, the Macartney mission has to be regarded as a complete failure. It gained none of the goals that it was said to gain and so that was the end of it. The Britain was occupied with other matters, namely the French Revolution and the Napoleonic wars until 1815. In 1816, there was another mission sent, the Amherst mission, which went nowhere. It didn't even have an audience with the emperor. Amherst screwed up things himself. He arrived in the capital without his credentials and court clothes and the Jiaqing Emperor apparently was in a bad mood about this and so replied, "How can we tolerate this kind of insolence?" and therefore dismissed the mission entirely. So Amherst just went back to Tianjin and the coast and went home, and that's it.

12.5 Opium

In the meantime, in the late 18th and the early nineteenth centuries, during the time of these two missions, there were big things happening down in Canton because, as we know by the 1770s or 1780s, the British had finally found something they could produce in India that would sell in the Chinese market, and that, of course, is opium.

12.5.1 *Opium's Spread in China*

Now opium in China had a relatively long history. Since the Tang, it was brought to China by Persians, and Arabs, and became very quickly a part of the Chinese *materia medica*. It was used to treat pain or depression or sleep disorders or any number of other things, but it had never been used for recreation, for pleasure. That practice actually stemmed from the Dutch, the Dutch sailors who were around Taiwan. The Dutch sailors in Taiwan had a habit of putting opium into their tobacco pipes and smoking it so as to give the tobacco a kind of added kick. This stuff was called madak and this practice spread from Taiwan to Fujian and Guangdong provinces. And that's the way that recreational use of opium started. We don't have any figures, but we do know that by the end of the eighteenth century, there was a regular seasonal trade in opium. The British were the chief purveyors, but the other European countries participated as well.

There's another aspect to opium that everyone should understand. Opium is addictive and this would be the way in which it would spread. But opium taken directly is not as addictive as distilled essences of opium, such as heroin or morphine, and is not necessarily overly addictive. That is, it takes some time to get truly addicted to opium, and it depends upon the individual personality. So it isn't as though this was like a crack—you do it one time, you want to do it forever, for the rest of your life. It became a kind of luxury goods that in certain upper-class households would be offered to guests as a part of entertainment. It was limited to the upper classes because they had the money to afford such luxury goods. Nevertheless, it spread. The figures for imports chests of opium each year rose steadily from the 1790s into the nineteenth century.

For whatever reason, the court did not react immediately. Rather, the opium question was put to the side until the 1830s. One of the effects of the opium trade was that silver was no longer flowing into China for tea and silk and other goods. Now in the early 1820s and 1830s, this flow was reversed so that the silver bullion was flowing out of China. By the 1830s, they were flowing out at a very high rate perhaps partially because in 1831, a cheaper form of opium called Malwa was introduced to the market. This Malwa was cheaper to produce and therefore became something like a mass-market item. So in the 1830s, the entire economy was being affected very severely.

Look at the way that at this time there was a convergence of long-term trends. We had the population throughout the eighteenth century increasing to an unprecedented level. This continued into the nineteenth century. This means that everybody in the empire was getting poorer. Now aside from that, we had the problem of silver flowing outward. China had a bi-metallic currency, that is, silver and copper coins, so many copper coins for so much silver. Once silver started flowing outward, this set up a situation for a hoarding of silver, which made the silver shortage even worse. And so the ratio between copper coins and silver was completely out of kilter. Suddenly everybody became poorer still because of this outflow of silver, because the ratio of copper coins to per tael of silver had increased enormously. So now there were very severe economic consequences to the opium trade. And it was at that time that the court took notice. In the 1830s, there were discussions at court and in fact in the latter part of the decade, you might call them debates.

12.5.2 *Why Opium Spreads so Rapidly?*

Now we will stop there before going on with who won the debates and what happened after that. Let's go back to the question of opium and its spread. Why did it spread so rapidly at this time? One possible explanation might be that precisely because of this explosion in population, everyone was getting poorer. I mean in one person's memory, there was a palpable difference in material consumption levels from childhood to old age. It is now becoming very clear everyone was getting poorer. This should have an effect on morale of the society in general and therefore might have led to a greater propensity to escaping through an opium dream.

There's another factor that I haven't mentioned yet. A trend in late imperial time was the increase of the number of lower gentry, that is, the lowest degree, the *xiuca* degree. Now the upper two degrees, *juren* or *jinshi* were required for anyone to hold office. You had to have at least the *juren* degree in order to actually be a candidate for an official position. But the lower gentry had the same expectations. They were now part of this privileged class of degree holders, sash wearers. They had other privileges in society but they could in all likelihood never hold office. So there was an increasing number of people at the bottom of the elite—perhaps you might call it who were running around looking for things to do. They were increasing because the population was increasing. However, the quotas for the *juren* and *jinshi* degrees did not change because the number of offices empire wide did not change. There was a kind of overproduction of lower degrees. They were trying to make a living in various ways. And because of the economic pressure caused by this explosion of population, their practices were getting sharper and sharper. And they were becoming desperate, that is, they had no chance of complete advancement in their careers. And could it be that it was the segment of population that too might have sought relief from their frustrations in opium?

There were of course other possible factors involved. I just mentioned these two, speculative though they are.

12.5.3 Effect of Opium Trade on Chinese Society

What effects did the opium trade have on Chinese society itself? Well, the first effect that it had was to increase corruption. That is, the opium trade was so profitable that in the process of transportation and distribution, everyone got a piece of the action, everyone got by way of bribes or by way of other similar gifts and so on, a piece of the opium profits. Now how was the opium transported and distributed? It was done by groups of armed men, sometimes the so-called triad organizations. They would bring opium inland. For such a high-value item, you had to have a considerable number of armed men in order to protect it. This meant that overall there were more and more armed men running about the place in South China specifically.

So these are two effects: an increase in the general corruption which leads to further inefficiencies in the bureaucracy, as well as a kind of militarization of society that starts partially because of this opium trade.

12.6 Opium War

12.6.1 Two Events Leading to the Opium War

In the 1830s, there were two important events that would directly contribute to the situation that led to the Opium War.

12.6.1.1 British East India Company Out of China

The first of these was that British East India Company went out of business. That is, it was supposed to have a monopoly on all British trade in the East in general. But by even the end of the eighteenth century, this monopoly was quite ineffective. It was because of other British traders who had entered especially the opium trade and were more aggressive essentially. This ineffective monopoly then meant that the East India Company could not maintain itself. In 1834, the East India Company went out of business in China anyway. Perhaps not in the rest of the world, but in China, there was no more British East India Company.

12.6.1.2 Lin Zexu's Opium Suppression Campaign

The second event that took place in the 1830s was the debate over policy—what to do about the opium question. The court was divided. Xu Naiji, one of the higher officials, argued that perhaps we should legalize it; in that way at least the court or the state could tax it and perhaps control it. On the other side, the official who emerged as the most prominent hardliner was Lin Zexu. Lin Zexu argued that the

emperor could not possibly do that because it would give him a bad name, that is, allowing his own people to be poisoned and therefore his reputation in history would be ruined. He would be a bad monarch, not caring for the people. So we had Lin Zexu's hardline being favored over the softer, the let's-tax-and-control-it line of Xu Naiji and others.

At the same time, even before Lin Zexu finally won and was appointed imperial commissioner and commissioned to go south and end the opium trade, in this area of Guangdong there was an effective opium suppression campaign. By the end of 1837, there had been thousands of people jailed or executed, that is, opium dealers and so on. But the foreign traders during this attempt to suppress opium were not touched. It was the Chinese traders (the Chinese merchants) who were being affected, and sometimes just consumers, opium smokers. It did work, however. And the opium prices went down and so on. So there was some effect on the opium trade.

It was the arrival of Lin Zexu as imperial commissioner, however, that was going to be the key event there. Lin Zexu felt that he was in the right and he was going to opt for the control of the supply, the external supply. In other words, he was going to stop the opium at its source, which was the foreign merchants who were, every year, bringing a new batch of opium into China and had it distributed by Chinese merchants. So he arrived. Among other things, he penned two letters to Queen Victoria, using common-sense moralizing line, like "Well, how would you like it, if some other people came to England and started selling toxic substances to your people?" Neither of the letters actually got to her because the captain of the ship was not recognized.

The other thing that he did was to start putting pressure on the foreign merchant community not only to stop the trade but to give over to him this year's opium. It was a seasonal trade. In order to persuade the foreign merchants to do this, he blockaded the factory, that is, the warehouse and offices of the foreigners located on an island in Canton city. So eventually they were under pressure; they had to give in.

But a very important event took place in the meantime. Remember in 1834 there was no more East India Company in Canton? In replacement the British government established a new official post called the superintendent of trade. Now this person was a representative of the British government, not a monopoly joint stock company like the East India Company. This particular person, who was named Elliot, was particularly crafty. When the factories had been blockaded, he saw that the only thing to do was to indeed take the opium. He himself as the representative of the government asked for this year's opium to be turned over to him and then he in turn would turn it over to Lin Zexu. The various merchants, the opium dealers protested at first but they had no choice. So that year's opium crop was indeed turned over to Lin Zexu, who destroyed it publicly.

In the meantime though, because the opium was in however temporary possession of a representative of the British government, namely Elliot, it was a question of destroying British government property. So Lin Zexu destroyed the property of the crown of England. This will serve with a lot of lobbying from the opium dealers back in London, as a *casus belli*, as a rationale for sending an armed expedition to China, which is what we usually call the Opium War.

Some of the American blue bloods, that is, the old money of New England, were indeed involved in the opium trade, the Forbes Family, for instance. It wasn't as though it was just these get-rich-quick pirates, like Jardine Matheson, Dent and so on, who were involved in it. It was sometimes the old upper classes who had become involved as well. In any case, the opium traders went back to London and started lobbying the government essentially for a war. They printed pamphlets which they distributed. They contacted members of parliament, and so eventually the motion to send an expeditionary force to China was debated in parliament and passed.

However, it didn't pass by very much. It squeezed through. It didn't have universal support at all. And the other European countries, especially the old rival France, did indeed criticize the British action—forcing a toxic substance on the Chinese. So this action was not greeted by everyone in Western Europe at all. It was still regarded by a considerable portion of the population as a very dastardly trade to be engaged in.

12.6.2 Course of the War

So the expeditionary force was sent. The rest is easy to understand. The British armies at this point were post-Napoleonic armies. During the Napoleonic wars of the early nineteenth century, weaponry in Europe was vastly improved, as it tended to be when countries were at war, for instance, artillery that has a groove on the inside of the barrel, rifled musketry, that is, you could send a projectile further with more accuracy with a rifled barrel than you could with the smooth bore gun. The steamship was now also available for military use. In the steamship armed with this long-range accurate artillery pieces was indeed a formidable weapon. It could come out of nowhere; that is to say, it didn't have to rely upon the tide and the wind. It could suddenly appear and visit considerable destruction on any place in the area which would generally be unable to respond or even get ready to respond.

So the various military actions that were fought were to a certain extent one-sided. It wasn't as though the Chinese side was not brave enough. The troops were getting killed in large numbers. It was the level of military technology and to a certain extent military organization that held the key to this somewhat lopsided victory of the British.

The war itself was divided into three stages punctuated by truces that were made. First, as people expected, it looked as though the expeditionary force was going to threaten Canton. Instead it didn't; it blockaded Canton and then moved northward to occupy some islands, but most importantly to threaten the capital. This was the time at which the emperor lost faith in Lin Zexu because he has caused this situation—of course he didn't in reality, but he was the reason why there was this very potent armed force knocking on the door of the capital itself off the coast.

So at that point, the first truce was signed and so the military operations ceased for a moment. The officials sent out to negotiate during these truces really had an extremely difficult job. They were caught in the middle. The Manchu grandee named Qishan, the first one sent out to negotiate with British, essentially agreed to some of

the British demands, including an indemnity, the cession in perpetuity of Hong Kong and also access to officialdom by British officialdom. This enraged the emperor and he had Qishan done away with, so the war continued.

In the end though, the British were able to move almost at will. They occupied off islands and Dinghai and Shanghai. And then they moved inland. They started going up the Yangtze River toward Nanjing, which eventually they reached. They didn't occupy the city, but their warships were now outside of Nanjing. And they had won military engagement all along, so at that point a treaty was signed on a British warship in the middle of the Yangtze River.

12.6.3 *Unequal Treaties*

This treaty is the first of the unequal treaties. However, it's not quite as unequal as the treaties signed with France and the United States two years later, in 1844. So this August 29th Treaty of 1842 with the British did include a certain expansion of trade—five ports open to trade. It did also provide for some of the other British demands, including a much larger indemnity. However, there was no most-favored-nation clause and no extra territoriality provision in these treaties. They came later. The Chinese strategy at the time must have been the employment of the tried-and-true strategy of *yiyizhiyi*, to use barbarians' jealousy between barbarians to control barbarians. It failed, of course.

The two treaties of 1844 with France and the United States were much more unequal than the original treaty with Britain. But because of the most-favored-nation clause, Britain also got new benefits, such as extra territoriality, a fixed tariff for the first time. Britain did, by the way, gain Hong Kong Island, seating it in perpetuity to the British.¹ These two other treaties, although they were much more unequal, did not provide for any ceding of territory to the United States or France. In fact, the United States from the very beginning tended not to have spheres of influence to invest in any areas. It wanted to keep its relations completely commercial and did not seek for the most part any political sphere of influence.

12.6.4 *Assessment of the War*

So that was the beginning of the unequal treaty system. All signatories of later treaties would essentially get the same privileges that any one other signatory had because of the most-favored-nation clause. So in the end, it would become a system, whereby all foreign powers with that clause would gain whatever privileges that any other power gained. And this was the beginning of a system that didn't end until 1943. So it was of a long running, and is clearly a magnification of pure imperialism. It was the

¹ This was declared one-sidedly by the British.

beginning of many other events in China but not the sole cause of them. Next time we'll talk about how in the nineteenth century it was not just foreign aggression that was the chief historical dynamic on the scene, but it was one of several that would cross in time to cause a certain effect that would follow.

Chapter 13

Background of the Nineteenth-Century Rebellion



13.1 Orthodoxy and Heterodoxy in Chinese Society

We are going to discuss the nineteenth-century rebellions soon. Before we do that, I think I will add a background note on the nature of religions because the nineteenth-century rebellions perhaps in certain aspect, all of them, had—whatever we would call in modern language anyway—a religious side.

Perhaps because Chinese civilization develops in such an indigenous fashion, you could say that discussing spirituality in pre-modern China is impossible using modern languages, especially Western modern languages. The nature of spirituality and the forms that it took in religious organizations are both not amenable to an accurate discussion in Western modern languages.

As I hinted previously, there was no such thing as a true orthodoxy in the proper sense of that word in pre-modern China. That is, there was no specific written doctrine that was connected to certain behavioral patterns directly. That is to say, unlike one of these religions where people would kill each other over the interpretation of one phrase in scripture, in the Chinese case, there was no such ironclad connection between a written dogma and certain behavioral patterns. There was, however, an orthopraxis. That is to say, there were certain rules of behavior that indeed have one standard, that were models of behavior, and they could be considered in that respect an action equivalent of orthodoxy, which we will call orthopraxis. Private belief, however, was always a private affair of the individual or of the families. There was no close supervision of private beliefs at all in pre-modern China—the state was not going to supervise all religious organizations and expressions. What follows is an extremely simplified view. It's the only kind that we'd have time for an extremely complicated reality.

13.1.1 *Elite Religion*

I just said that there was no orthodoxy, and that was indeed true but there was what might be considered an orthodox religious organization—the state. The state itself had a religion which we could call the religion of *Tian*, the religion of Heaven. Now this, as well as what we are calling general Confucianism, had a spiritual side. Of course, by the twentieth century, Chinese intellectuals would tell the outside world that there was no Confucian religion. Previous to that, in the Ming Dynasty, the Jesuits were telling Europe exactly the same thing. However, in reality, Confucianism and the state religion of *Tian* did indeed have a religious side. To a certain extent, it would depend upon how you understand, or how you interpret the “敬” character of respect and reverence, because within that character could be a sense of what we would call in modern times a religious or spiritual sense.

This state religion of *Tian* was headed by the emperor himself because he was the Pope. As the pope of the religion of *Tian*, he made a determinacy of what figures would be revered, in other words, what figures would be part of the pantheon in what you might call the religion of *Tian*. However, there was nothing doctrinal about any of this. This is what happened in late imperial time. A cult of Guan Yu (*Guangong*), became so popular and widespread that the state adopted Guan Yu as its official martial deity and there was nothing rigidly attached to any written dogma about any of this religion of *Tian*. It was extremely flexible. It was as flexible as it could be.

13.1.2 *Folk Religion*

That is one level of the spirituality. The other level would be what we might call in late imperial times popular religion.

13.1.2.1 A Mixture of Various Thoughts

There is always animism/shamanism as an element in the folk religion, or we might more accurately call them folk religions because it takes so many varied forms with so many different liturgies and pantheons and practices that we call them folk religions collectively.

Now within that mix (folk religions), in late imperial times all of the central elements were not animistic at all but animism interacted with them. The largest proportion was that of religious Taoism. There were two smaller elements of what we had to call Confucianism and Buddhism so that Bodhisattvas appeared as deities in the folk religion. And they somewhere go back and forth, Taoist deities as well as what we might call Confucian deities. Of course the idea of a deity at all was somewhat antithetical to real Confucianism. Nevertheless, there were certain models

of behavior imbedded in certain figures that were so outstanding that these figures would be recognized as extremely potent in the other world just as they were potent and virtuous in this world, and they could be appealed to for help.

13.1.2.2 Two Fundamentals

All of these elements took myriad forms throughout those two thousand some years. There were, however, certainly—one might say—two fundamentals that they all shared.

One was the idea of reincarnation, (which of course is Buddhist), and punishment for wrong doings. It's not to say that *Tian* didn't have exactly the same sense. *Tian* is anthropomorphic in certain respect so that even today in speech you have such expressions that would indicate an anthropomorphic being that is interested in such questions as rewards and punishment, right and wrong, so you would say, “老天爷有眼, the Lord Heaven have eyes.” That is when some injustice is righted or when the good guys win. And if the opposite occurs, “老天爷瞎了眼,” that is, the Lord Heaven was blind. So there is a sense of an anthropomorphic deity who looked after punishment of wrong doing even in the official religion. But it is more pronounced in the folk religion. While in more Buddhist-oriented organizations, you have depictions of heavens and hells and this turns on the idea of reincarnation.

A second common element had to do with certain regimens of personal hygiene, faith healing, the efficacy of certain practices, certain exercises and certain diets. That is, most of these folk religions have these two elements in them.

13.1.2.3 Cross-Class Feature

The religion of Heaven, the state religion, was a cross-class institution, so were the folk religions. This is something perhaps not recognized. It has to do with the original cosmology that I spoke of at the beginning. That is, if two things are judged good and all true, even though on surface they might be antithetical, they are one part of an interdependent harmonious whole of the cosmos, so that's why the Aristotelian law of identity does not apply.

So because of this you could have the elite participating in the folk religions as well as the folk, the masses of people, who even without knowing it, participating in the religion of Heaven and all of those moral rules that would apply to that religion. There is a good reason for this in the case of China, another unique feature of Chinese civilization that has to do with social, political, economic mobility. That is a family could go up and down, which it did regularly. They brought with them practices, beliefs, etc., downward into a society as well as upward into a society. This was possible as I said because of the cosmological view which allowed for compartmentalization. That is, I am now in a different airtight compartment, I can practice this folk religion and yet that doesn't mean that I'm turning my back on the

state religion of Heaven or what might be called the rules of “common decency,” the norms of civilized society. I can participate in both. I can participate in several folk religions.

In the same way, an individual could participate in several philosophical/religious traditions. The cliché was that an individual would go to serve as an official in the morning and he would, in essence, be a Legalist with Confucian rhetoric. Then he’d go home and manage family affairs, other social affairs having to do with the moral bonds between social roles and he would be a Confucianist. Then that evening, he would get tipsy with his friend and write poetry, or do some other creative things and commune with nature in his garden. Then he would be a Taoist. So in the same way, later in the evening, he might visit an especially efficacious deity, one who could really favor the production of male children, for instance. So the religion of Confucianism were certainly not confined to the upper classes and the folk religions were again certainly not confined to the lower classes. As I said, it’s primarily because of the extremely flexible, mobile nature of social, political and economic status.

This state of affairs is in sharp contrast to that of other civilizations of the world where there is a relatively clear break between what has been called by some anthropologists “the great tradition” that involves literacy and high religion and the little tradition, the folk tradition. In the case of Chinese civilization, this line between the two is very much blurred. Everyone participated in Confucianism to the extent that no one ever questioned ancestor worship or familialism or filial piety or the norms of generationalism. Everyone participated in that no matter what their station in society. And these various values, that is filial piety, familialism, hierarchy, meritocracy, were seen by everyone as “natural,” as just the way that the world worked or should work.

A lack of a socially segmented ideology—we might call that—accounts for the fact that there was never any formal criticism of Confucianism in the sense that I’m using it now, that is, the common decency, the common basic norms of civilized life. Everyone participated in all of these beliefs with no criticism. There might have been at the upper reaches of the intellectual elite, certain tensions; in fact, we know there were—between Buddhism and Confucianism. So in the Song and some time later, you have a way of putting a shift in the allegiance. That is from Buddhism to Confucianism or the reverse, but that usually didn’t mean a complete abandonment of whatever was being left. It was a change in perhaps the center of gravity. It didn’t mean exclusive allegiance to the norms of one or the other.

13.1.3 Conflict Between Orthodoxy and Heterodoxy

So was there then any conflict between what we might call orthodoxy and heterodoxy? Yes, there was. That is when any system of beliefs, any religious organization became the basis for a potentially powerful military action or a potentially powerful political organization. That would lead to suppression by the state. Any time any of these organizations touched upon the realm of political/military power, then they

would be called by the state *xiejiao* (a perverted evil sect), and therefore would be suppressed. But it had nothing to do with the content of the beliefs, it had to do with the political/military potential of that organization.

13.2 Types and Modes of Secret Societies

Within folk religions, there are many traditions. I am going to simplify things greatly by my analysis of them right now. In broad strokes, one could speak of, at least until the late nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries, two great traditions of folk organizations. They were both potentially anti-dynastic, that is, potentially politically subversive, but not necessarily in ordinary life.

13.2.1 Southern Triads

These two traditions are the southern tradition of what we call in English these days, “Triads,” and the northern tradition. In Chinese, these southern secret societies, as they are called in Western languages, had many names, *Tiandihui*, *Hongmen*, or *Sandianhui* and so on, or subsumed under the term “secret society.” They are decidedly more important in the South than they are in the North. In fact, it would be hard to say that any southern-style triad organization existed in the North, at least as, until the late nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries when certain organizations did spread into the North.

They have two states of being, one which was active rebellion, and the other which was passive, thereby none of the actions by the organizations would be political at all. It would be focused upon other things.

The southern tradition, more than the northern tradition, takes the form of mutual-aid societies, mutual-aid organizations. That’s why the Triads are so important in areas where there are many emigrants, there’s a lot of mobility in the population. For instance, in a certain area such as Southeast Asia in the nineteenth century, the first waves of emigration were solely unmarried young males. They would be the ones to emigrate. When they arrived, or in fact before they got there, they had no mutual aid-organizations to perform the same functions that back home kin organizations would perform. So very often, because of this, the Triad type of organizations would become extremely strong. They would perform the same function as any mutual-aid organization and would probably, except formalistically, have nothing to do with the actual anti-dynastic actions. They would perform primarily as mutual aid.

The only rebellion up until the early twentieth century that was actually Triads rebellion, an outright rebellion, was that of Zhu Yigui in the mid-eighteenth century in Taiwan. Now why would that be? It was because in the middle eighteenth century, Taiwan was still a frontier society. That is to say, it was still heavily populated by

single unattached males who had not created their own kin's structure yet. And it is precisely in this kind of situation that you have the need for mutual-aid organizations.

These Triad organizations were in their religious dimensions heavily folk Taoist, that is, religious Taoist. Those were the primary deities involved and much of the ceremonies, the liturgies of these societies were also derived from folk Taoism rather than Buddhism. The organization Triads would be generational. That is, there is a generation that is above the others, and therefore, they rank higher. The older the better of course. And so you could have a hierarchy of several generations very neatly ranked, having nothing to do with chronological age, but with the rank of the person within that organization.

This is a remarked contrast to the northern organizations, which I am about to speak.

13.2.2 Northern Tradition

The northern tradition that I mentioned was more oriented to Buddhism. They were not primarily mutual-aid organizations although any network could function as such. Rather, they emphasized actual practice of the religion.

The folk Buddhist traditions are quite pervasive especially in North China. Sometimes, they are called the White Lotus tradition. They call the 1790 rebellion the White Lotus Rebellion. As it turns out, some relatively recent researches have shown that there was actually no actual organization that called itself White Lotus. White Lotus was a term originating very early during the Song apparently that was used by the official side, by the state to, in a generic fashion, designate undesirable religious organizations, that is, anti-dynastic, or at least in the state's eyes having the potential for the anti-dynastic action. However, no one organization ever called itself White Lotus. Therefore, you can't really speak of a White Lotus Sect. You could, however, speak what might be called White Lotus tradition in which these other northern, you call them dissident, Buddhist sects would fall. Dissident of Buddhism meaning they were not, first of all, strict Buddhist, and secondly, they were not part of official Buddhism (that is, of the licensed clergy). They had the lay clergy. Usually the leaders of these local sects would be in possession of certain scriptures, sacred scrolls as they were called. And these scriptures would be passed down hereditarily within one family. There was no demand automatically for rebellion, that is, nothing in the religious beliefs or practices themselves called for anti-dynastic action.

Then why do we have anti-dynastic action by some of these northern-style White Lotus sects? Because there are various Buddhist elements within it, that is, the change of Kalpa. A Kalpa is, in Buddhist terminology, one of the periodic, complete destruction of the world (of the universe) that would then reassemble itself. But at one point, the entire universe would be destroyed and reassembled. So when the Kalpa changes is a complete rupture with the past. It seems to me there are certain resemblances between this element and in Fundamentalist Protestantism, especially American Protestantism; there is a term called "the rapture" in which essentially the end of

the world will come, all of the evil doers will be destroyed, and all of the good people, the members of the community, would ascend directly into heaven. They would, in some of the descriptions of rapture, they would simply disappear from the earth and then after they had ascended into heaven, would be the destructive part. The end of the world, the end of days, takes place. So there is often a millenarian element in these White Lotus sects/organizations. Otherwise, if the Kalpa is not perceived of as going to change soon, then these sects will be more or less passive practitioners of a certain religious tradition: reading of the sacred scrolls, vegetarianism, mantra chanting, sutra reading and so on.

This type of organization, in contrast to the Triad organizations, was organized on a different kind of hierarchy, not pseudo kin (elder brother-younger brother), not generational, but rather teacher-student. And so the basis was of some person bringing into religion or teaching several students, who in turn might have their own students. But the basis of the hierarchy was perceived of as a hierarchy of teacher-student relationships.

This is significant in many ways because in southern Triads, there was no question only males would be able to participate. Of course, the families of triad members would have a special status. But no women actually gained any position of leadership in these Triad organizations. In the northern tradition, because it's a teacher-student relationship, a woman conceivably could be in a superior position to many males because she would be the religious teacher who would convey to them the content of this dissident Buddhist faith.

In the northern tradition, leaders tended to be faith healers, that is, these groups would form around someone who could essentially cure illnesses. That was extremely common in the northern tradition. In the southern tradition, you don't have that. Its major function was mutual aid, and had nothing to do with faith healing. The southern triads supported themselves economically very often by various, usually illegal activities, gambling and such. And it had no particular mission, no particular emphasis upon healing. It's quite pronounced.

Both traditions, however, shared an association with what might be called the knight errant (*youxia*) tradition of martial arts and doing righteous acts, usually involving martial arts and physical force. The northern tradition and the southern tradition, once they turned active as opposed to being in passive state would indeed be anti-dynastic. The more dramatic was of the northern tradition. They would be anti-dynastic but in a way because the Kalpa was going to change, they were expecting the entire world to be transformed which goes beyond a particular dynasty. This did not mean, however, that they did not conceive of the world after transformation as being all that different from this world. There was practice, for instance, of, prior to the Kalpa change, selling offices. That is to say, you want to be the minister of revenue in the coming transformed world after the Kalpa changes, then you make a contribution of so much money, and you will get a certificate that will state that you are going to be, or you are appointed the Minister of Revenue.

In the northern tradition again, there are these various, sometimes severe ascetic practices which seem to derive from its Buddhist content. But also a certain struggle to transform the world by a victory of a kind of forces of light, forces of darkness,

struggle. An example of the northern tradition dissident Buddhist sect of active state would be the rebellion of the Eight Trigrams Society in 1813, one that actually got in to the gates of the imperial palace itself. It's again a perfect example of this expectation that the world was going to be transformed.

13.3 Dynastic Decline

Let's look then at the eighteenth century. Within that century we have the very heights of Chinese civilization in certain respects. Its reigns of the three emperors Kangxi, Yongzheng and Qianlong were the most glorious and yet within that period, you find the seeds of decline by the very end of the seventeenth century, or certainly by the beginning of the eighteenth century.

13.3.1 Population Explosion

These seeds of decline would, first of all, be the doubling of the population during that one century that was going beyond, well beyond, whatever population figure had been reached previous to that time in Chinese history. It is during this period of great glory, peace, and prosperity that the fundamental, historical dynamic that's going to act upon the development of Chinese civilization in the nineteenth century is present.

13.3.2 Traditional Factors of Decline

Another one would be in a way the very glories that were spoken of—such as the Ten Great Campaigns of the Qianlong Emperor, for instance. They include sending an expedition to Taiwan to put down the Zhu Yigui Rebellion, sending an expedition to Nepal to replace the king, certain campaigns against certain Inner Asian tribes, tribal confederations. These ten great campaigns were all successful but they cost money, so that combined with the depredations of He Shen, at the end of the century—(He Shen being Qianlong's trusted servant)—the national treasury (the treasury of the empire) was quite depleted.

13.3.3 Decay of Military Force

Another factor that is a manifestation of this decline is the inability of the state to put down very quickly the White Lotus Rebellion of the 1790s. This indicates that the

military machine that the Manchus had relied upon was already going into a state of decay or disrepair. It was no longer the military force that it once was. And neither was the Han version, the Army of the Green Standard, because this rebellion went on over an extended period in the 1790s.

And of course, the suppression itself, as it was prolonged, also cost money. So at the beginning of the nineteenth century, we have these manifestations of dynastic decline very pronounced. Only, aside from the traditional manifestations of dynastic decline, you have added to it the population explosion that has taken place in the eighteenth century and then because the geometric nature of population increase, rises extremely rapidly in the first part of the nineteenth century. So at this point, the end of the reign of Qianlong Emperor, one could say that Chinese civilization had reached a sort of tipping point. That is, because of the various factors that are going to converge in time, precisely then, there would have to be, forced by these factors, some kind of fundamental transformation of state and to a certain extent, society. We could summarize events as dynastic decline plus certain unprecedented problems that come with population explosion.

13.3.4 Failure of Mechanisms

The first and the most obvious is the economic problem that population explosion would create but then beyond that, there are the mechanisms of government that were developed over a long period of time to administer a population of half, or third, or fourth the size of the then current population as it grew in the early nineteenth century. That's another aspect. Even certain organizations, certain formations in society such as a kin-based lineage were based upon face-to-face group. That is, you had to have few enough people to get together, people who knew each other and were able to relate to each other in a very familiar way. Once the population explodes, that means that lineage populations also explode, so the general mechanisms that held lineage together were also going into trouble.

13.3.5 No Technological Advances

Added to that, for the previous two hundred years at least, there had been no significant technological advances. Added to that again, because of the population increase, by the latter part of the eighteenth century, nineteenth century, China was in, or could be said to be in, what's been called the "high level equilibrium trap." That is to say, the population has now grown to such size that labor became less expensive. That in turn meant that technological innovations that would tap other energy sources aside from muscle power were not going to be developed. There was no need to do so. There was no economic pressure to force their development, no economic pressure to develop labor saving devices because in such a situation, you didn't have to save

on labor. Human labor was so inexpensive and the development of any technologies would be so risky and so costly that naturally there was no widespread desire to develop these new technologies, whatever they might have been.

13.3.6 No Cultural Advances

There is another element that takes place in the eighteenth century: that is, a certain breakdown of certain intellectual conditions through what's called the evidentiary scholarship, *hanxue*, Han learning type of scholarship which is a school of philological analysis. It was discovered that certain of the recognized classics, parts of them, were forgeries. There is a lot of discussions in certain circles—Dai Zhen would be involved and some others that it would certainly be a factor that we could throw into the mix, that is, at that time, doubts were being developed about the accuracy, the veracity or authenticity rather, of certain classic texts.

It is precisely at this time we have these massive scholarly projects that take place. *Siku congkan*, for instance, would be a good example. That is essentially the state was going to make the best edition of everything ever written. This implies that everything that is worth knowing is already known, that our job at present is merely to present the best edition of all that is known and arranging it in a convenient fashion, convenient for access into one body. The implication is of course, that's it. There is no need to explore further knowledge. We know all the knowledge that there is. It's in there somewhere. And that's the limitation on human knowledge, there is no more. They aren't making any more of it. That is it. So these factors are certainly important when we reach the beginning of the nineteenth century: population, dynastic decline, plus these other smaller manifestations of—one would have to call it—a decline of some sort, a kind of over-maturation of a tradition perhaps.

Then, thirdly, we have an unprecedented factor of Western imperialism, of the arrival of Western countries' militarily great force in China. So we could divide all of these factors into three. Population growth/explosion (being the first and perhaps the single most important), population growth itself was certainly going to ensure that China would have to do fundamental reorganizations to the state as I said, even in certain respects, to society. The second factor that was preceded was dynastic decline. That's the only preceded phenomenon that we have to deal with. The third unprecedented external factor would be Western imperialism. So you have two indigenous historical forces, historical dynamics, on the scene and one exogenous, that is, imperialism that comes from the outside. Two are completely unprecedented, that is, the population explosion and Western imperialism, and the third is, as I said, preceded.

It is primarily these longer-term trends that converge at this time that make what happens later in the nineteenth century. If you remove even one of these factors, then the result would have been different. There is this idea that only at this time with this convergence of these factors that you would have the same result as actually took place.

Chapter 14

The Taiping Rebellion



14.1 The Mid-Nineteenth-Century Rebellions

We are now going to discuss the mid-nineteenth-century rebellions, a watershed event in modern Chinese history. In some respect, you could say that they or even more importantly, their suppression is as important as the Opium War. This series of events, these rebellions themselves and their suppression would change the nature of the Chinese state forever in that no longer would a true center be located in the capital, in Beijing, until the 1950s.

14.1.1 Four Areas of Rebellion

There were four major areas of rebellion. The most important, the largest, the most threatening to the dynasty was the *Taipingtianguo*, the Heavenly Kingdom of the Taipings. They, for the most part, were limited eventually to the Yangtze Valley. That is quite significant because it is the Yangtze Valley that contained the most population and most of the productivity of the entire empire.

The second most important were the Nians, the Nianjun. The Nian rebels were in the North and North-central China. They were of completely different nature from the Taipings. They were not interested in overthrowing the system. They wanted to get into the system “on the cheek” as it were. They were not particularly interested in overthrowing anything.

The third was a certain minor rebellion among ethnic groups, usually in the Southwest, the Miao and Yao. These were more or less not threatening at all, but they added to the general disorder of things.

And finally there are areas where Muslims were always restless. If not in a rebellion, they are a cause for concern. So we shall first talk about the most important of these rebellions, the Taiping Rebellion.

14.1.2 Situation of South China

So what is the situation in South China at this point? What factors are now in play on South Chinese society that were not so fifty years or twenty years before the 1840s?

First of all, you have the traditional manifestations of dynastic decline, increase in squeeze, less efficient bureaucracy and all of those other things that we have mentioned that go along with the general syndrome with dynastic decline.

Secondly, we have the disrupting effects of the opium trade. This means essentially that the entire area is going to have increased militarization; that is to say, there will be more bodies of armed men going about the place because of the opium. The opium, of course, increases the corruption and the inefficiency of bureaucracy. It is the transport of opium, the distribution of opium, that calls for large bodies of armed men. And to a certain extent, this is just one factor in the disruptive effects of opium. You have other effects of simply disabling a considerable segment of the population, including the elite in some cases. It includes, for instance, the Manchu military machine that's going to be affected by opium.

What is another factor that acts on South China overall? There are effects of Western presence by the 1840s. After the Opium War especially, it was very clear. The British navy by driving the pirates inland up the rivers increases the general disorder, the general concentration of armed men. Actually there were linkages between the triads and the pirates as early as 1795. But the British navy forces the issue, and drives the pirates inland.

Then there is an effect of the rise of Shanghai. Shanghai is going to be the focus of British presence. This means that the foreign trade and other operations are going to leave Canton and go to Shanghai. This means in turn that many people are going to be thrown out of work in the general area because of this shift.

And finally a fourth factor that seems to arise at this time is ethnically based rebellions. This will be, to a certain extent, the model that the Taiping followed, at least, in the beginning. So there are the Miao rebels in the Southwest. In 1836, we have them staging a rebellion. This is to a certain extent a new factor on the scene.

14.2 The Hakkas

So now to get to the actual Taiping rebellion, the founder, the creator and the leader of the Taipings was Hong Xiuquan. And he was ethnically, I suppose you could call it, a Hakka.

The Hakkas are originally northern people, from North China, who immigrated southward during the Song or after, during the Yuan in five waves of immigration. And because they arrived there, in the South later, they usually ended up in the poorer lands, that is, in the less productive areas. They are Han, they do speak a different dialect but so does everyone else. They happen to keep their dialect intact, which is

the reason why Hakkas speech, *kejia* speech, is closer to Mandarin; it sounds closer than Cantonese, or various types of dialects within Guangdong Province do.

The Hakkas always had the mentality of a besieged minority, that the environment was very hostile to them. The locals were interested in destroying them. At least, they were perceived of as wanting to destroy them, or at least oppress them. That meant the internal solidarity of the Hakka community was extremely strong. It also meant that the Hakkas were forced to be more practical, hard-working than the locals because otherwise, they wouldn't have been able to survive. And to a certain extent, we shall see within the Taiping rebellion certain manifestations of the Hakka mentality, and its, extreme practicality, and some smaller features like no bound feet. Hakkas did not bind their women's feet. Other aspects like a greater practicality, a greater frugality, a stronger puritanistic strain, will be manifested later in Taiping organization in ideology itself.

14.3 The Taiping Rebellion

14.3.1 *Hong Xiuquan*

Hong Xiuquan is a native of Hua county, which is 30 miles maybe north of old Canton. It's now divided into two separate counties. I visited one, Huadong county in 1973 and it was still all Hakka. In 1973, at that time, the children could only speak Hakka. They might gradually learn Cantonese, but no one spoke *putonghua*. The population at that time were still speaking primarily the Hakka dialect. In any case, it is a rather poor county, so Hong was not from an elite family, a gentry family. But he was a very studious person and so in 1837 went to the prefecture which is in Canton itself to take the first level of exam, the *xiucai* exam. And he failed.

At that time, a certain pamphlet came into his hands, written by a certain Liang A-fa, an early Christian convert. The nature of that pamphlet was very Old Testament. It has strong delineations of the angry, vengeful, powerful Jehovah and very little about Jesus. It was more an emphasis upon what we might call fundamentalist Protestant beliefs about this awesome choice between eternal damnation and eternal happiness in heaven. And the choice was in fact the individual's. So the individual was teetering on a brink. In fact, this pamphlet suggested that the world itself was teetering on a brink. It had, to a certain extent, this apocalyptic tone that there is a coming crisis in the world and everyone will have to make a choice, very little about forgiveness and the messiah and inheritance of the earth and so on, and less the New Testament of Jesus and much more about the Old Testament's wrathful Jehovah and so that is going to be the primary element in the version of Christianity that Hong Xiuquan develops.

Continuing the story, Hong is very disappointed. He returns home and continues to study hard and he goes into basically some kind of illness. That is, he is feverish for quite a long period and has what might be considered psychotic episodes. Anyway,

he recovers. He continues to study for the examination. He goes back to Canton again and takes the examinations and he fails but the reaction to this failure, the last time, was completely different from the other failures he had.

Previously he would be full of these feelings of worthlessness, of being extremely guilty about this failure. It was all his fault. This time he goes home not with the feeling of worthlessness but exactly the opposite. He is angry rather than himself penitent about his past. He then goes back and look at that pamphlet "Good words to exhort the age" by Liang A-fa and then suddenly everything falls into place for him. He remembers the dreams that he had had in his feverish state and now links his dreams up to the content of pamphlet.

In the dreams, there was a golden bearded old person and a younger middle-aged person who Hong in the dream thought of as his elder brother. The golden bearded person places a sword into the hands of Hong with the instruction that he should destroy demons; that is to say, he is supposed to take some kind of military action, I suppose, vigorous military action against non-believers, especially against the worshippers of idols, which is of course a very big factor in the Old Testament. So he now sees himself as a son of the figure with the golden beard, who is Jehovah. He sees the other figure who is older than him and he thought as his older brother, Jesus, and so he now has a Messianic mission to essentially save the world and destroy idols. He becomes then a very early convert to Christianity.

His very first manifestations, of course, are to go to local temples and destroy the idols in them. This does not make him very popular locally and so he loses his teaching job and his life is going southward rapidly. At the time though, he does make a convert of an extremely talented cousin, Feng Yunshan. And it is Feng Yunshan who will be Hong's "St. Paul." He would be the one who actually constructs the organization and spreads it. He will be Hong's right-hand man. And so this is the beginning of a society that was going to be called the God Worshippers (because the supreme deity in Protestantism is *Shangdi*), so these were worshippers of Shangdi. So the God Worshippers were all at the beginning Hakka. There are certain intervening events that Hong goes to Hong Kong to study with an American Southern Baptist, a very fundamentalist-oriented Protestant missionary, Issachar J. Roberts.

And during the time he is away, his cousin Feng Yunshan is out there organizing. What essentially happens is that there is a shift from Hua County and the area around Canton westward in Guangxi. You have a large number of Hakka and it is on the basis of this ethnic identity that the religious organization is founded. So at the beginning, this was an ethnic organization that was reinforced by religious belief, or you could say vice versa. It makes no difference. At the beginning then we have Hakka communities linked together by this God Worshippers network in Guangxi. And those God Worshippers who are originally in Guangdong then move also to join these religious leaders in Guangxi. They have a particular point in which they are based, and it is they who are able to call upon this widespread network of God Worshippers together.

14.3.2 *Open Rebellion*

When Hong returned from Hong Kong in 1847, there is already well-established church, that is, individual congregation in villages throughout the area. At the same time, these various factors that we have mentioned are increasing in strength, that is, at this time, there starts to be a famine essentially. It doesn't happen until 1849. There are many manifestations of shortage of food. Because of large numbers of armed men roaming around the place, or because of the opium, we have more armed clashes between lineage militias and so the clashes over resources between the *punti*, the *bendi*, local people and the Hakkas increase throughout this period. So it very soon became clear that they were not going to be able to sustain themselves in Guangxi anymore. What happens essentially is that they got squeezed out of Guangxi, northward.

In 1849, the famine does occur. This increases the strength of all the other factors. It is at this time that Hong and religious leaders start planning for what is essentially a large organization, Taipingtianguo (the Heavenly Kingdom) as well as increasing enforcement of these moral codes for everyone, increasingly puritanistic, quite severe. So when local Triads came to join the Taipings, or hope to join the Taipings, (that is, the bandwagon effect that I mentioned), they are because they themselves don't want to give up certain practices that are absolutely forbidden by this puritanistic code of God Worshipers. It is indicative of one of the difficulties that Taiping will have in joining other anti-dynastic groups in general.

In July of 1850, there is a grand convergence of the God Worshipers at Zijingshan. That is, these congregations from all over, sell their possessions and are going to Zijingshan. Again this was when armed conflict was increasing. This was the time of famine, and so it is at this point that there is a decision made for open and outright rebellion. This is announced in January of 1851. The Heavenly Kingdom is going to destroy the Qing.

By the time the Taiping Kingdom is proclaimed, the response of the imperial government, it could be described as too little too late. The troops are sent but essentially they are defeated in a very important battle in 1851 that the Taipings win Yong'an, a prefectural city in the north of Guangxi. And they are going to be squeezed northward. They are going to go through the province of Hunan toward the Yangtze Valley. And it is during that process of moving through Hunan they got many adherences. It's, as I said, similar to a snowball, if climatic conditions are right. And certainly they were right at this time with the population being triple beyond ever had before, and possibly quadrupled. There were plenty of poverty-stricken people who had nothing to lose, joined the Taipings, so the snowball going through Hunan picked up a lot of snow.

14.3.3 *Military Successes*

They were also militarily successful against the troops of the Qing for two reasons. One, the troops of the Qing were not as they were, as I said. They were in decided decline. They were not an efficient fighting force anymore. The Taiping side did not win, however, many of these battles by superior strategy (although Feng Yunshan was a pretty good strategist). They won because they were fanatics; that is, they didn't mind dying. In pre-modern warfare, if the two sides of any military engagement share a similar technology, and if there are no specific, strategic tricks that can be pulled, it is the side with the most people who aren't afraid of dying that will win. And in this case, that is exactly what happened. They are militarily successful because they being a religious society have the most fanatics in their army.

The second reason that they were successful in picking up adherence as they went through Hunan was that while at this point, they didn't have to ask for anything from local society. They were still traveling with their original capital. Some of the Taiping leaders were actually very wealthy individuals so the common treasury that they were traveling with was still sufficient to support them as they went through Hunan. In history in general, anytime, a body of armed men especially go through rural communities, simply take what they want because they are armed and the local isn't. In the Taiping case, this does not happen and thus the attitude of the locals are affected by this, so they do pick up a lot of adherence as they moved toward the Yangtze River system.

Once they reach the Yangtze River valley they simply go down the river and take Nanjing in 1853. Once they get into the Yangtze River system, as I said, that runs through the most productive, the most populous part of China, they are more or less set. They have a territory they can control. They establish the capital in Nanjing and that essentially stops the momentum that they had. There was an expedition sent northward toward Beijing but it simply does not work. It's probably because the southerners going into the strange environment, this cold, dry, riceless environment of the north, they simply didn't feel the same way as they did when they were fighting in the South. And so the attempt to take Beijing itself fails. For the rest of the war, it is essentially Taiping holding onto around the Yangtze Valley. They never take Shanghai but they take Suzhou eventually.

After 1860, there is a decided decline even though there is military resurrections led by Li Xiucheng, a Taiping leader later. In the end, what is being fought over are the lines of communication of the rivers with Nanjing and the major task, military task that is being performed, is to keep them open to feed the capital with grain. You had to have these lines of transportation and they are the parts that the Taipings actually did control, the larger urban enclaves, as well as the lines of communication. They never got to the point that they control the entire countryside, the entire rural areas.

14.3.4 *The Taiping Ideology*

The Taiping religion or the Taiping ideology is in certain respects very appealing to modern sensibilities. That is, it seems to be much more democratic than the alternative at the time. And it has other features that moderns would applaud. Basically, as I said, it was extremely puritanistic religion that forbade everything. Some of those things were essentially Hakka practices to begin with, and therefore, they were put into the religion.

Hakkas are very practical. Hakkas don't smoke opium. Hakkas don't smoke tobacco. Because they are practical, don't take concubines. They don't gamble either, so this was extremely puritanistic religion that would, to a certain extent, reflect the Hakka background from which it came. There is no binding foot of course. There is a certain quality that exists in this religion. This, as I said, is appealing to modern sensibility. Moreover, they were against real vices such as opium that was obviously quite undesirable in retrospect, if not at the time, so their ideology was relatively well regarded.

There is another aspect that appeals to the modern mind and to a certain extent, scholars argued, it might have prefigured or adumbrated communist establishment of the People's Republic of China under the Communist Party. This was the ideal way that they were going to reorganize society completely. This was in a way the most revolutionary aspect of their ideology.

All families are going to be organized into 25-family units. They would have a common treasury, common land. They would have basically communism of sorts. They would be governed or overseen by a *Liang Sima*, an official who was authorized by Taiping religious authority as well. Within this organization, there was no possible way of getting out of it. It would be farming common land, Hakka's respect to Chinese tradition and Chinese history. It is a statist solution to certain problems of economic distribution; that is to say, originally there was an ideal of the welfare system, whereby there would be a common field that would be cultivated by all families. Each family had equal land holdings. And therefore, the common field would be for the state, would produce a tax revenue for the state.

After that, there was *juntian* system (the "equal field" system) which again reflected this heavily statist solution to such problems. That is, all land theoretically in the empire was going to be distributed in equal portions to everyone depending upon population. And then when people die, there would be another distribution so this was supposed to be going on essentially forever. In the Taiping case, there is no mention of redistribution because they needed the support of the people now. They didn't want to think of the next chronological step of redistribution after the population of a family had changed.

Why do I say this is the most revolutionary aspect? Because that official is going to displace familial authority. He is going to be a bureaucrat who has more power over the families than the family heads do, than the household heads do. This destroys some of the basic assumptions about the way the society works that held previously.

Secondly, quite significantly, the authorization that the Taiping leaders had was not conditional on the will of Heaven. It was completely unconditional authorization by God forever to the Taiping leadership and therefore the system of administration below them. This, to a certain extent, is a far cry from what Chinese tradition is. The emperor, people in leadership positions, held their positions conditionally, conditional upon their moral state and upon what they do. So these are two elements of the Taiping ideal plan that are untraditional and could be considered fundamentally revolutionary.

14.4 The Suppression

As I said, it is the suppression of these rebellions that in a way, has more historical significance than the rebellions themselves, which could be considered as part of traditional dynastic decline. What am I referring to then as the overall importance of this suppression? It essentially disassembled the Chinese state.

The capital, the Manchus, the court had no other choice because essentially the Taipings were superior militarily. The Taiping was in a position of military superiority and that meant their suppression would call for new types of forces. They were obviously not going to be suppressed, defeated by the traditional armed forces of the Manchus, the Manchu banners, the army of green standard. These armies were now in complete decay, and simply were unable to meet the challenges presented by the Taipings. It is the rise of the regional official. This is the unprecedented event in Chinese imperial history.

14.4.1 *Zeng Guofan*

The first of these is Zeng Guofan. Zeng Guofan, upon returning to his hometown in Hunan, the bread basket of China, returned to attend his mother's funeral. He saw that locally there were already local militias for self-defense against the Taipings. Essentially he derives great inspiration from this, so he is going to suggest to the court that he be given military as well as civil power over his home province. There are several breaks in tradition here, several breaks in the usual practice.

First, military and civil official authority was never invested in one person because if you do that, you make that person essentially independent. He can raise revenues to support an army that would be a protection against any military threats by the state. That's one aspect.

Then secondly, because the "law of avoidance" was that no one could serve in their home provinces because they would be able to call upon their local connections to perhaps create their own "independent kingdom," as it were. So these are two absolutely revolutionary aspects. The court backs Zeng, Sushun, Wenqing and other Manchu officials back him. Ironically, it is some of the Han officials who see that

this is not the way to run an empire. You are enabling this person to create his own de facto state. But they are overridden by the Manchus, because the Manchus have the most to lose. They are interested in preserving themselves. They see that they can't do that with the present means that they have at their command so they have no choice but to go with Zeng Guofan. And so created the Hunan Army.

This is a local army that's held together by local connections between gentry, that is, private relationships start at the village level where there is a unit, sometimes, two villages or more together up until you reach the county, so these various military units are merged into one at the county level again relying upon the local connections, the relationships, the networks of the local gentry. Then the counties, prefectures are merged into one big organization at the top Hunan itself, the capital itself. Now that means this is an army essentially private in nature. It's held together by personal relationships, by private networks. And the leader will be connected in the same way to the army. He, Zeng Guofan, will be at the top of this pyramid of these local networks.

There still remain problems though. That is, how are you going to support this army? At this point, no land taxes could be collected in many parts of the empire. The Valley, for instance, would be a good example. The most productive part of China, was not resorting in any income for the court. There are many areas throughout the empire that were out of control. They could not be taxed. So Zeng Guofan uses a different kind of tax to support his army, a local tax called *lijin*, a tax on goods in transport, that is, certain checkpoints are set up beside roads and the value of goods passing through will be assessed and a certain small percentage of value will be paid and it transfers into tax.

This proved to be extremely successful, extremely efficient, in that there are fewer opportunities to take before it reached the ultimate goal of Zeng Guofan's provincial treasury. This also sets a pattern for later taxations that run into the twentieth century, that is, the land tax is going to decline generally in importance, and other kinds of taxation are going to be more and more important. This is the model of it.

14.4.2 Li Hongzhang

Zeng Guofan's most important protégé is Li Hongzhang. Li Hongzhang has the area around the Shanghai delta and this is a very, very important economic area, especially because it provides a lot of opportunities to tax as much trade is going on in that region. Therefore, it's a very rich prize.

Li Hongzhang in certain respects is even more successful than Zeng Guofan and other region officials Zuo Zongtang and so on, who would be following the models set by Zeng Guofan and Li Hongzhang. They will be doing exactly the same thing. It is Li Hongzhang's Huai army that, compared to the Hunan army, is actually more modern. Li Hongzhang is more open to modern weaponry.

However, a characteristic of the Hunan army which I think is extremely important is that it was highly indoctrinated. That is, Zeng Guofan himself was 110% Confucian.

He took the entire Confucian enterprise of self-cultivation and continuous moral improvement and so on very seriously. He spent his time very often in precisely those kinds of activities that could be considered Confucian, advising his younger brother for instance. This would be very typical of him. He was, if you could use the phrase, a “muscular Confucian”; that is, there is a phrase, “muscular Christianity” that is connected with physical strength and health in the late nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries in the United States and Britain. So this was a muscular Confucianism.

The troops of the Hunan army were indoctrinated in fundamental Confucian precepts and the Taipings was so utterly outlandish, that they were seen as the “end of civilization” as the people at that time knew it. So this combination of the highly indoctrinated forces against the ultimate enemy, the people who are going to destroy civilization, really worked well. To a certain extent, the Taiping ideology was matched to some degree by the Hunan army’s enthusiastic Confucianism.

The emphasis in the Hunan Army is that it’s going to be well paid but not necessarily large. It’s going to be more professional than other armies. These qualities also contributed to its success. The same is true to a certain extent with Li Hongzhang’s Huai Army.

14.4.3 Western Involvement

We should add a note here about the Western attitudes toward the Taipings. They undergo considerable change. At the beginning, in the early 1850s, the Christian powers, especially Britain and the United States, saw in the Taipings a great, wonderful event that was going to lead China onto the true path, onto Christianity, and therefore, the Taipings had much sympathy from the Western powers at the beginning.

Over the 1850s, however, the sympathy was lessened by the realization that Taiping Christianity wasn’t exactly “your father’s Christianity.” Remember Issachar Roberts, Hong’s teacher in Hong Kong? He is invited to visit Hong in Nanjing and he does so, but he comes out of Nanjing raging against Hong. He thinks that Hong is completely unscriptural. He is not a Christian. And what is especially horrifying to him was that Hong wanted Roberts to propagate Hong’s religion, not Roberts’ version of Christianity, but Hong’s version of Christianity. He wants Roberts to be a missionary for the Taipings. Once the realization of what’s being called Christianity was not quite there in the Western standard, the sympathy waned.

The final event that assured the support of Western powers to the Qing took place in 1860. This was the time when the capital Beijing was actually going to be occupied by the foreign troops. The Franco-British expeditionary force essentially loots Beijing at this point and occupies it for a while. However, the following treaty settlement, the Conventions of Beijing give imperialistic powers a very good deal so to a certain extent, they have their best interest in the preservation of the Qing.

A second event in 1861 is a thrust toward Shanghai from the upper river, from the Nanjing led by “the Loyal Prince” Li Xiucheng. It fails but this attempt to take Shanghai really freaks out the foreign treaty port people and they see in the Taipings now a real threat to their own existence. It is at this time in response to this attempt against Shanghai that western involvement becomes concretized in an organization of Western-style military force that led in this case by an American adventurer Fredrick Townson Ward.

He organizes mostly deserters from other European armies in the Shanghai area. He then recruits 4,000 Chinese to staff the army. The officers are going to train this army in Western style rather than Chinese style. He arms them with modern-style weapons, rifles and so on. Now this force did indeed make a contribution to stopping Li Xiucheng from taking Shanghai and the emperor rewards this force the title “the Ever-victorious Army.” Ward himself is going to be killed in an action. In fact, as far as I know, Ward is the only American to whom a temple was ever erected. That is, after his death, a martyr to the imperial cause, there was indeed a temple erected to him. I don’t know what happened to it after that but indeed it did exist. I saw photographs of it. This Ever-victorious Army is now going to be led by actually a British serving officer Charles Gordon.

Charles Gordon will meet his end in 1885 in Khartoum by the Mahdi. But while he is leading the Ever-victorious Army, he is still doing pretty well. So he himself becomes a regular Chinese official. He has court dress which had a queue attached to the back of the cap and so on. This is the most interesting phenomenon of course.

But the presence of the Ever-victorious Army was not going to change the course of events at all. It was very clear. What defeats Taipings are these regional armies and the local populace. That is, the Taipings never get the allegiance of most of the countryside. There are forced, toward the end, to resort to naked extortion to obtain taxes to support the organization. That is, it would be an assessment of the certain area, certain county or certain market town of so many catties of grain by a certain time. This was called *jingong*—presenting tribute.

14.5 Reasons for Taiping Failure

14.5.1 Administrative Failure

The point was there was no regularized relationship between the Taiping state and the rural areas. That was their fundamental flaw. They never established a bureaucracy that could establish a regular relationship with the local populace. This action of creating one was extremely difficult because the Taipings were against everything associated with the present ruling class of scholars and bureaucrats, although toward the end, there is a Taiping examination system that is instituted but it’s based on the Christian classics rather than the Confucian classics and based upon the writings of Hong and so on. But the gentry class as a whole, the scholar bureaucrats who were

necessary to run any bureaucracy, they have the experience in knowing how to do so—were alienated by the simple outlandishness of the Taipings, so the Taipings were unable to staff bureaucracy and therefore, none existed. There is no regularized relationship between the state and society.

So without an authorized relationship with society, without a secure economic base, without a constant, regularized flow of grain and domain, essentially the sinew of war, the Taiping state was in a very precarious position. Once they had lost their original momentum, this kind of state could not exist. In fact, the Taiping, in order to succeed, would have had to construct a real state of its own to rival the Qing state. Of course it never did.

There were other problems, that the Taipings had that contributed to their eventual failure, among which was its puritanistic nature, and the nature of theocratic authority; that is, Hong, the founder of religion who claimed to be the Son of God and so on, received the message from God through a dream. And so it was easy enough for other people to have dreams to be possessed, communicating directly with God. This led to his rivalries which in turn led to wiping out the entire clans so this was also not a very strong point among the Taipings because theocratic authority relying upon direct communication with God is not going to be that regularized. People can claim to have direct communication with God.

14.5.2 Strategic Failure

They also had a strategic failure. That is to say, they were essentially surrounded by the countryside in the Yangtze Valley and yet they could not achieve control over that territory. They could control only the cities and the lines of communication, the rivers. In the later part of the war, they were just fighting to preserve these lines of communication and the cities themselves, so this kind of arrangement is easily surrounded and choked off, which is to a certain extent exactly what happens. That's again another factor of weakness.

14.5.3 Limited Popular Support

But in the end we have to say the major factor that defeated the Taipings is the old order in the countryside was still strong and vigorous but that's what the Hunan army, or Huai army, was based upon, so the old order was still vigorous enough to put down any revolutionary attempt to transform society.

I suppose I should also mention another factor of Taiping weakness, and that is in the quality of adherence in the religious organization, that is, despite the Puritanistic, no concubines, no fancy food, no drinking, etc., there were certain "exceptions" made for the leadership who might have large palace, feast on the finest food and wear the finest of garments. It was easy to tell who the Old Believers were. They were the

elite of the religion. It had to do with hair. In fact, one of the names of the Taiping used by the state—used by the imperial side—was the “long-haired rebels.” This was because upon entering the rebellious stage, their hair would be allowed to grow and would be against the Manchu custom of shaving the front part of the head. So you could tell immediately by the length of hair who had joined the rebellion earliest and the Old Believers from back in the Guangxi days were naturally going to be the elite. They were going to be the senior in this organization and would make certain exceptions to the general rule for themselves in lifestyle.

14.6 Historical Interpretations of the Taipings

The Taipings have been interpreted as historical phenomenon in many ways in China and outside China. Some people would argue that this is merely another peasant war or another rural uprising, no great differences with those that came before. Some people would argue that because of the content of the Taiping religion, there is indeed a revolutionary element in it. Some people basing themselves basically upon Marxist Historical Materialism would argue that they represented a kind of nascent bourgeoisie, a bourgeois democratic force; that is to say, some of the leaders, the ones who became wealthy did so through entrepreneurship; they were often in charcoal business, for instance. And they were close enough to the area that was most impacted by the West, that is, the Canton area, that they would be regarded as the first sprouts of bourgeois consciousness. Really there is no way of making a final determination as to what class they represent.

I think the more important part is what defeated them, and that is the rise of the regional officials and regional armies as well as the still vigorous health of traditional cultural values in the countryside. The overall historical importance of all these rebellions, as I said, is in the way that they are suppressed.

Zeng Guofan, Li Hongzhang and the others were essentially capable of marching in to Beijing at any time and taking it, founding their own dynasty, but they didn't because they saw themselves as protectors of this order. They were on the inside. They also still craved for the various distinctions and awards that could be gained from the throne, so the thought never occurred to them to expel the Manchus. They were bound to the Manchus, to the system, by the traditional virtues of loyalty, by their own desire to protect the system, and by their desire to receive double-eyed peacock feathers and such other distinctions that the emperor could award. So, in the end, these are in a way nascent warlords, except that the idea of making themselves completely independent never occurred to them. They have the same capacities as the early twentieth century warlords would have. They had the power of taxation and military power invested in one person but again because of their consciousness, because of their ideology, there was no question that they were not going to be national warlords.

This meant, however, that the Chinese state was never going to be united again. To a certain extent, these developments that take place in the suppression of the

rebellions prefigure what's going to happen in the early twentieth century to the state, not just the warlords phenomena but even the Republican Revolution. The Republican Revolution is made to a certain extent by default. There are a few uprisings but all of the provinces immediately declared independence. Prior to the 1911 revolution, there were open struggles between local elites, provincial elites and the state, and Beijing. So to a certain extent, the 1911 Revolution could be seen as a reaction to the late Qing attempt to reconstitute the center. Local elites are not interested anymore in having a strong center. They are more or less establishing a pattern of local, rather than central government control. So the major inheritance that comes from the Taipings is this dissolution of the Qing state as had existed prior.

Chapter 15

Foreign Affairs Movement



15.1 Origin and Nature of this Movement

We are now going to discuss the first attempt to industrialize by China. It was not one in which the central government took the lead primarily because while the rebellions were still raging, the central government had very little control over things and it was the regional officials who had sufficient autonomy and the resources to start industrialization projects, in other words, modern industries. The entire period and this attempt, industrialization or modernization, is usually termed the Foreign Affairs, *Yangwu yundong* (Movement), or the *Ziqiang* (the Self-Strengthening) Movement.

15.2 Periodization of Industrialization

First, before addressing the specifics of that period of 1860–1895, let's give a general periodization scheme for the process of industrialization.

It is important to realize that when these industrialization projects started around 1862, the rebellions were still active and one of the important factors affecting the choice of industry by the regional officials was to put down the rebellions. So the first period, let's say, 1862–1872, was characterized by military industries, by things like the Jiangnan Arsenal or the Shipyards at Fuzhou.

The second period, 1872–1895, was the era of what was called the “official supervision, merchant management” system, *Guandu ShangBan* system, whereby officials would be involved in these enterprises, while the actual management was carried out by businessmen. In this period, in the 1870s and on into the 1880s, we have an enlargement of the spheres of industrialization to include light industry, and this means that the realm of cultural borrowing (borrowing these foreign technologies), would enlarge overall. It would get in fact larger over time, starting with the opening wedge of military industries, then through time including many other economic areas.

From 1895 to 1900 we have, because of the Treaty of Shimonoseki, a dominance of foreign enterprises, and a kind of suppression of native Chinese enterprises or industries.

From 1900 to 1911, the last years of the Qing Dynasty, the central government, the court in Beijing, finally takes the lead in fostering industries, so that is a period of not necessarily successful but attempted centrally directed industrialization.

Finally, the last period that I am going to mention is after 1911, through the 1920s and 1930s. It is especially the 1910s and the 1920s that is a golden age for Chinese industrialization, primarily because the European powers have their attention focused elsewhere, namely in Europe, because this is the period of the First World War and it enables native Chinese industries to get a foothold and grow in the Chinese market.

15.3 Specifics of Foreign Affairs Movement

Let's look in more detail at industrialization between 1862 and 1895, the era of the Foreign Affairs or Self-Strengthening Movement. In a way, the general movement toward modernization, (if you have to call it something), starts at the end of the treaty settlements in 1860, when the Franco-British expeditionary forces occupies the capital and therefore more or less dictates terms to the court. At the same time, Russia, as usual trying to present itself as a friend of China against the Europeans, also takes a good deal of the advantage of the situation, detaching from the Qing Empire the maritime provinces and some parts of Xinjiang.

15.3.1 *Innovations Related to Industrialization*

So what happened after that? There were two very significant events, both of which were opposed by certain cultural conservatives at court. The first was the establishment of the “*Zongli Yamen*,” a kind of foreign affairs office that wasn't called foreign affairs office. To a certain extent, this was supposed to be the equivalent of Western European Ministries of Foreign Affairs. It had a slightly different name because there were still some reluctance to accept that the world had changed and that China was no longer the center of essentially a world civilization and the center of a wide tributary network. So this creation of the “*Zong li Yamen*” was quite significant in that respect. In 1861 also you have the establishment of Tianjin Superintendent of Trade, Shanghai Superintendent of Trade. Both of these were suggested by Prince Gong, who was behind many of these innovations.

In 1862 again, we have an extremely significant innovation that's only indirectly connected with the industrialization. It is the establishment of what has been called the Interpreter College, *Tongwen Guan*, which was basically the first Western-style school in China as well as the first Western-style curriculum taught in China. It was the 1860 Treaty settlement that stipulated that the official versions of the treaties were

the English and French versions. So naturally there was a great need to train people in these foreign languages. The Interpreter College had an eight-year curriculum, quite rigorous: the first three years devoted to language and then after that to the sciences (depending upon one's major) to world affairs or mathematics, astronomy, physics, physiology, the scientific subjects. Now the best minds in the empire were not sent to this institution, primarily because there was so much prestige attached to the regular orthodox official career and the regular orthodox degrees in the examination system that the best of families will not send their sons to this—what appears to be an experimental and, to a certain extent, distasteful school—which was modeled on barbarian education and to a certain extent could be seen as “learning from barbarians.”

In 1869, a journalist, W.A.P. Martin becomes the president. It's indeed a remarkable institution in that it's the first part of acquaintance in general of Western culture in China. Later in the 1870s, it establishes its own publishing house and these publications, usually translations from foreign languages, start becoming quite popular. There is at the beginning a concentration upon international law because the Chinese court, finding itself in this entirely new situation of international relations (European style), wanted to know the “rules of the game.” So, one of the first translations was Wheaton's *International Law*. This school becomes the prototype of an institution disseminating foreign knowledge. Similar schools were founded just a few years later in the 1860s in Shanghai, Guangzhou and Fuzhou.

15.3.2 Two Phases of Industrialization

15.3.2.1 1862–1872 Military Industries

During the period of the 1860s, it was very obvious that the regional officials were interested only, not just primarily, in military modernization, in weaponry. So the first such enterprise is actually a small gun factory in Suzhou that Li Hongzhang establishes. In 1865 the Jiangnan Arsenal is established, again by regional officials Li and Zeng. In 1866, the Fuzhou Dockyard is founded. Its machines, that is, for the making of ships, were purchased from France and for some time the enterprise was administered by two Frenchmen. In 1867, another arsenal, the Nanjing Arsenal, is established by Li, and again the first administrator of this arsenal is a Westerner, named Halliday Macartney. He is actually an M.D. He is not a specialist in this regard, but he is the first administrator of the Nanjing Arsenal. In 1867, there is a slight variation in this pattern by the creation of the Tianjin Machine Factory, that is, to make the machines that can make other machines.

15.3.2.2 1872–1895 *Guandu Shangban* System

In 1872, another period clearly starts. In that year, there are several military officers sent for study in Germany. That is, it's still military modernization but not just buying hardware or establishing factories for hardware but sending military officials abroad. Again, this is done by Li Hongzhang. In 1872, the China Merchants' Steam Navigation Company again by Li Hongzhang is established and this is quite significant because this kind of enterprise is clearly not limited to military affairs. It turns out to be relatively successful as well, this is an "Official Supervision, Merchant Management" enterprise. In 1872 as well, for the first time a relatively large number of Chinese students are sent abroad for study. There are 30 students sent to New Haven, Connecticut. Some of them end up graduating from Yale University there. The mission is usually known by the name of its leader Rong Hong, who was a Chinese who had lived abroad. In 1877, you see a continuation of this pattern of broader economic enterprises being established by the creation of the Kaiping Coal Mines. In 1878, you have a Textile factory founded by Zuo Zongtang in Gansu Province. In 1878 also there is the Shanghai Cotton Cloth Mill created by Li Hongzhang.

So you can see that starting in 1872, there's a broader focus on industries that were not directly related to military modernization. In the 1880s, this pattern continues with the creation of the Hubei Textile Company or the opening of certain infrastructural industry, such as the Imperial Telegraph, and creation of railway, 6 miles of railway, anyway, north of Tianjin. The other aspects of sending more students abroad, for instance, are continuing as well so that in 1883 and 1884 there were naval students and apprentices sent to study ship-building in Britain and France and Germany, and 9 other students sent to Britain to learn navigation. In 1885, a military academy is created in Tianjin by Li Hongzhang and this would be an example of continuation of the original focus on military modernization but much broader in that this is a modern-style military academy for the training of modern-style officers. This pattern continues in 1890s' establishment of iron mines or the Hanyang Ironworks and the Pingxiang Coal Mines, and so on. These were founded by Zhang Zhidong, a new entry into the ranks of regional officialdom. In 1893, there was another textile manufacturing plant established. In 1894, there were other modern companies established as well as a continued importation of military hardware, especially warships as Li Hongzhang at this point has built a modern navy, which is quite large. And the warships themselves were bought directly from Europe and were the most modern at the time and of the largest sorts.

So you can summarize this entire period as something like a cone. At the beginning, there is a concentration on military industries. Through time, it includes various types of economic and infrastructural industries. When we get to the 1898 Reforms, however short-lived, it was obviously the direction; then you start seeing cultural borrowing from the West that includes a broader spectrum. It's getting into education in a major way.

15.4 “Official Supervision, Merchant Management” System

Speaking directly about the specific industrial method or system of the “official supervision, merchant management,” we can immediately see that these enterprises have not made a complete break with the past, that there is a continuation of a certain traditional attitude that would essentially hinder these enterprises from their course.

15.4.1 *Traditional Bureaucratic Management*

A first example would be that there is a bureaucratic management style that is not appropriate or effective in the management of modern industries and there’s a dominance of particularistic values rather than universal ones. That means you hire your cousin instead of a qualified engineer for a certain post. There is a somewhat soft line drawn between graft or squeeze and the regular expenses. And to a certain extent, this is also a hindrance because modern enterprises have all of their aspects made rational and efficient. There is a strict accounting of funds from this to that.

15.4.2 *Lack of Initiative*

Secondly, another feature that stems from this bureaucratic style of leadership is the general lack of initiative. Bureaucrats tend to be cautious, they are risk-averse; they do not want to take risks, they do not want to take up some innovation, the consequences of which could not be clearly foreseen. As the phrase goes in Chinese, “*Duo yi shi buru shao yi shi*,” “doing nothing is better than doing something in general” because doing something in a bureaucratic system might put you at risk.

15.4.3 *Official Exactions*

Another area of weakness might be the official exactions on these industries. That is, the bureaucrats would put the squeeze on these industries for funds, which we would call contribution or whatever but the problem is that this would weaken the industry overall. As a matter of fact, it’s in sharp contrast to what is going on simultaneously in Japan, where the central government is not trying to exploit new-style enterprises but rather to foster them, to support them. So this feature of the “*Guandu Shangban*” was again a great hindrance.

15.4.4 Monopoly Rights

Another feature that was not appropriate to modern industry or modern industrial competition is monopoly rights. All of these industries, in order to attract investors, would be given an official monopoly on whatever they were making. It was a monopoly that was functioning primarily to protect those interests of the people investing in the enterprise. And this does not make for efficient management. Monopolies tend to be, because of their very nature, not all that efficient.

15.4.5 Lack of Capital

And finally, these “*Guandu Shangban*” enterprises were lacking capital. That is especially true in contrast to the Western enterprises. They were undercapitalized. This was always a problem. The companies were simply short of money to take innovative steps to expand when they saw an opportunity to do so.

So these are five weaknesses of the “*Guandu Shangban*” system.

15.5 General Obstacles to Chinese Industrialization

Overall, in any kind of enterprise, there were difficulties in the latter part of the nineteenth century as well. Some of them were related to the “官督商办” system and some were not directly related.

15.5.1 Foreign Economic Pressure

I mean the first, and in certain ways the most important, was foreign economic pressure and presence. That is, foreign firms had technological infrastructures that gave them advantages; they had the Unequal Treaty System that gave them advantages; they had experiences in these industries; they had an artificially low tariff; and they were in general also much more heavily capitalized than Chinese firms. So this could be seen as simply a result of imperialism, and of the Unequal Treaty System. There were certain other areas that hindered Chinese industry, aside from the advantages that foreign firms had derived from the unequal treaties.

15.5.2 Growing Impotence of the Imperial Government

Secondly, and in contrast to Japan, there was the growing impotence of the imperial government, of the center, of the capital, of the court. So throughout the nineteenth century, the central government was incurring one debt after another, one defeat after another and simply did not have the wherewithal to nurture any of these newer enterprises as was happening in Japan. It was not a strong vigorous national authority that was directing this operation.

15.5.3 Inadequate Accumulation of Capital

Thirdly across the board, Chinese enterprises were undercapitalized compared to foreign firms. There were good reasons for this. As I have mentioned earlier, the most prestigious investment you could make would be in land, not in some kind of strange modern enterprise. So prestige aside, land seems to be a safer bet, a safer way of investment as well. And the profits from modern industry and foreign trade and banking were in most cases not enough. And in any case they were very seldom put back into the enterprises, that is, reinvested.

15.5.4 Technological Backwardness

Fourthly and again, this has to do with both foreign competition as well as a cross-the-board weakness. Chinese enterprises tended to be technologically backward. They had no training schools to train Chinese personnel in these technological skills, unlike the foreign firms that did. And so this was a major block in developing any kind of modern industry. Unless you have technocrats of the sort that know how the technologies operate in very specific detail, you will add a great disadvantage in developing. And part of this, I suppose you could say, would be a psycho-ideological barrier or block in motivation. There was traditionally a very low value put on mercantile activity, on merchants, on industry of any sort, on technological activity. That is, there is so much more prestige in an official career that it was difficult to make a choice to take up a technological career. Those who were trained technologically very often had very bad luck upon returning to China. The more famous example would be that of Yan Fu, who always was frustrated by his inability to get on “the inside.” And he ascribed that to his lack of an official degree.

15.6 Conclusion

So summing up, the first modernization movement could not be considered a great roaring success. It was, however, certainly a start that would be built upon in the later periods and expanded upon. Of course, it wouldn't be done in the "*Guandu Shangban*" formula. It would be done with pure merchant management without any official supervision.

Chapter 16

Chinese Foreign Relations 1857–1895



16.1 Patterns of Foreign Relations 1860–1895

We are now going to speak of Chinese foreign relations between the treaty settlement of 1860 and the end of the Sino-Japanese War of 1894–1895. Throughout this period, there are certain features that remain relatively constant.

After that treaty settlement, the Convention of Beijing in 1860, you can see a regular pattern emerging. When at all possible the various imperialist powers would try to further encroach upon China, Japan and Russia did so especially. So that even in the 1860 treaty settlement, like I said, the Russians liked to present themselves as a friend of China against the Western Europeans but they seldom actually help China diplomatically, and very often exacted something for whatever diplomatic help they would give.

The second interesting characteristic is that the dominant world power of the time, Britain, tended to be a force for stability, rather than further encroach on Chinese territorial integrity. It would always favor a stable solution to any difficulty that would arise diplomatically.

Finally, because Britain and Russia were the major rivals on the world stage at the time; you find that the Russians will very often do precisely what I just said: take advantage in order to encroach on various areas, the more important areas during this period to the West of China's Xinjiang and to the Northeast (the Russian "Maritime provinces"). That is, the Russian Empire would try to, if at all possible, move in southern direction threatening British India. This was part of a general competition between the two empires, which sometimes involved what was called the "Great Game," especially involving the area to the West of Xinjiang. Kashgar, for instance, was a center for various espionage operations.

16.2 Old Patterns of Diplomatic Relations Crumble

So we start off with the 1860 treaty settlements which are the true unequal treaties then in place. The system doesn't go away until 1943. And perhaps the more significant matter of the 1860 treaty settlements is that it destroys completely the pretense of a universal kingship and of a tribute system. That is, China is forced to "go European" in that they would adopt the conventions of European diplomatic intercourse rather than relying upon the older patterns of tribute-state relationships.

16.2.1 *Japanese Seizure of the Liuqiu Islands*

The first event, a very untoward event that takes place in this period, starts in 1871. It has to do with the Liuqiu Islands (Ryukyu). Now the Ryukyu kingdom had sent tribute missions to Beijing eight times during the immediate preceding period. However, as early as 1609, the Japanese state Han of Satsuma had subjugated these islands and did not want to interfere with the economic benefits that the tribute missions to Beijing would bring. So the entire relationship between the Japanese state of Satsuma and the Liuqiu Islands was kept more or less secret. Beijing was never aware of the true situation, this double identity of the Liuqiu Islands.

So in 1871, some sailors from the islands were shipwrecked in Taiwan and they were killed by the local aboriginal population. Japan then started to act as though the Liuqiu was part of Japan, was really Japanese territory. It was responsible, then, for the loss of life and property of Japanese and that meant that it was going to take action on this flimsy pretext to occupy Taiwan, or at least part of it. So that was quite untoward, especially because Beijing at this time was, as I said, not the political center anymore and so nobody responded to this crisis in Taiwan.

Eventually, partially because of British pressure, the Japanese withdrew, but only after the payment of an indemnity as well as the acknowledgment of Japanese suzerainty over these islands—that is, Japan owns these islands. It was the first time that a former tribute state was simply removed and taken over by another country.

16.2.2 *Ili Valley Crisis*

The next untoward event is the Ili Valley Crisis. That is to say, between 1871 and 1881 there was a continued controversy or problem in western Xinjiang, China. First, in 1871 a local chieftain, Yakub Beg by name, took advantage of the court's preoccupation with domestic rebellion to set up his own kingdom in western Xinjiang. Now the Russians, who were always looking for an opportunity to encroach further, then claimed that Russian lives and property were in danger in that this disorder of Yakub Beg was not put down—I mean not settled immediately by the Chinese state,

so they were “forced” to intervene. And so the Russians moved in and occupied the Ili Valley and after Yakub Beg was suppressed they still didn’t move. An interesting aspect to this was that Zuo Zongtang moved into Xinjiang to solidify Qing control over it; not too much attention had been paid to it up until that time. It was, after this, going to be made a regular part of the empire. Up until this time, it really wasn’t so.

Zuo Zongtang, waging this campaign putting down Yakub Beg and so on, was actually aided by the British. Certain logistical matters were essentially helped along by the British; that is, there were certain supplies that were put at the end of his march. Otherwise, he would have to have carried them himself over a very very large stretch of territory. The British were interested in doing this first because they liked stability in China and, secondly, because it would be essentially against the Russians. So in 1878 that’s where the situation is: the Russians still wouldn’t leave; Yakub Beg was put down but the Russians still occupied the Ili Valley of Chinese territory.

There were a series of events that follow. Chonghou, a Manchu high official, was sent to Russia to negotiate a treaty settlement and he screwed it up entirely. He really “gave away the farm”; that is, he allowed for an indemnity, further territorial encroachment and privileges for the Russians. When he returned to China with this treaty, it was met with outrage, especially by a certain group at court called the “Qingliu” or the “Qingyi,” the “Pure Party”; that was a relatively ideologically committed group of officials who saw themselves as “above the fray,” acting only on principle, not on the grounds of self-interest. Very often these people were censors who tended to be culturally conservative anyway. Now this reaction by the Qingliu was extremely important because it would set the tone for another diplomatic problem that arose shortly after. The Qingliu increasingly conditioned other members of the court to say that: we will simply not agree to any of these. We want the Russians to leave, or else we will go to war. We will move the capital if necessary, but we shall make a final decision to resist this foreign encroachment and go all out in military terms.

Now this reaction created in Russia a kind of debate. And the Russians gradually realized that fighting a war at the end of this enormously long supply line that went back to European Russia would be extremely difficult. Moreover, there was diplomatic pressure from other nations and so this ten-year crisis ended with the Russians withdrawing from the Ili Valley. This more or less reinforced the opinions of the Qingliu, who essentially said, “See, I told you so. You just have to be firm with these people and they will back down.” So this result increased their influence at court.

16.2.3 Sino-French War

The next diplomatic crisis is over a former tribute state of what we call Vietnam today. Now the French had established the presence there very early during the Napoleonic Era. Their original hope, I suppose, was to get into China through “the back door” as it were, from Vietnam and thus get around the British. During the Napoleonic Era,

there were various operations that took place and the Chinese did not respond. That is, the Chinese Empire did not attempt to keep the French from encroaching upon Vietnam or “Annam” as it was called at the time.

The French discovered that the Mekong River, which was down in southern Vietnam, was not navigable all the way into China. And so they then developed a great interest in northern Vietnam. They were not allowed to do so, however, because a group of what you might call irregulars or bandits or triads under the name of the “Black Flags” would fight a proxy war with them (that is, proxy of the Qing Empire throughout this time). And so hostilities had been going on, not between the Qing Empire officially and the French Empire but rather between the Black Flags and the French. Eventually, this proxy war came to a head and once again the court in Beijing was presented with a crisis.

The Qingliu (the Pure Party) that had raised its prestige by its hawk-like stance with the Russians just a few years before 1884 (which is when this happens) were now calling for the same thing, resistance. “Let’s go to war.” And in fact, they seemed to have been right the last time, so much of the court also went along with them. So there was an outright war between the Chinese Empire and the French Empire. The results of this war were somewhat disastrous in that the Fuzhou’s shipyard—China’s major modern shipbuilding capacity was destroyed ironically by the French fleet, even though the operation of the Mawei Shipyards in Fuzhou was created with French technological help and built with the French machines. So the French fleet destroyed it, a great loss for the modernization attempts made by regional officials. The French also occupied some of Taiwan at the same time. So we had the French destroying the shipyard, occupying Taiwan and continuing this land war in Vietnam, not between the Black Flags any more but between Qing troops and French troops.

There, the Qing had a bit of luck. The French, very interestingly, in 1954 had a similar situation. That is, there was a siege of a place in Vietnam called Dienbianfu. So the French met a defeat in 1954 because of a siege in Vietnam and that defeat meant that they would leave Vietnam entirely. That was the end of French colonization of Indochina. Back in 1884, and 1885 they got themselves in exactly the same kind of situation only at a place called Liangshan. There was a siege of that place that ended in a French defeat. This meant that the French could not demand too much at the treaty settlement. They had to give up a lot of things that they originally wanted because of this military defeat and again because of diplomatic pressure from other imperialist countries.

So in a way the Qing Empire got off relatively easily but that relationship with a major tribute state was gone forever; that is, the French were recognized as essentially the rulers of Vietnam by the Qing Empire. So that was another blow to the traditional way that the Chinese empires had operated. Then aside from that, the French destroyed the Fuzhou Shipyard, which in turn meant that China would not have again another major modern shipbuilding capacity until much much later.

16.2.4 The Sino-Japanese War of 1894–1895

The true watershed event of diplomatic intercourse in this period, the one event that has enormous influence forever after is the Sino-Japanese War of 1894–1895. It is fought essentially over Korea.

16.2.4.1 Background

Before the Manchus came South and conquered Beijing and the rest of China, they had already made Korea part of a tribute system of the Manchu Empire. And so their relationship with Korea went further back. It meant that foreign relations of Korea were handled by the Manchus. One of the reasons why at the time Korea had the nickname “the Hermit Kingdom” is that it didn’t have any diplomatic relations of its own. It was only through China that it did. And this is the last important former tribute state that exists at this point.

The Japanese signed an unequal treaty with Korea in 1876. So they are obviously focusing upon further expansion in Korea. In general, there develops a kind of proxy struggle within Korea, the culturally conservative side being attached to China and the progressive modernizing side being attached to Japan, or sponsored by Japan. There are various conflicts that go on between the two. And in 1880, Korean affairs, which was as a tribute state handled by the Board of Rites, were now handed over to Li Hongzhang himself personally. So that’s why, among other reasons at the time, the Sino-Japanese War of 1894–1895 was described as, by the foreign press, the war between Li Hongzhang and Korea.

So in 1884, there was open-armed conflict. Both sides send troops. Eventually, the conflict is settled by a convention signed between Japan and China, called the Li-Ito Convention. Li Hongzhang again is the signer of this diplomatic instrument. It meant that any time one side or the other was going to send troops in Korea, it would have to first notify the other side. Now during this period there was an attempted coup by the progressives that was put down. Things continued on with the tension between the progressives and the conservatives in Korea, thus continuing the tension between Japan and China for several years.

By 1894, the Japanese had now transformed themselves literally into a modern nation-state. It decides essentially that they are ready to take on the Chinese Empire, which they see was not responding to foreign challenges very well. And in any case all they have to deal with in reality is Li Hongzhang, not all of the Chinese Empire. So that’s exactly what happens. The Japanese provoke a war by various pretexts, one of which is extremely flimsy. The leader of that coup of 1884 is killed in Shanghai, and his body is brought back to Korea in a Chinese boat. Now the Japanese take that event as a great insult to Japan and this is sufficient to arouse enough national support to go to war with China.

The foreign countries expected that Japan would lose this war; that is, the Western Europeans and the Russians all considered this would eventually result in a Japanese

defeat. That was not to be the case, however. And that's what makes this war so important in its general effects on China. The Japanese do win and this is so shocking to everyone, including the foreigners, that it will have consequences quite profound forever after, starting immediately in 1895 when the Treaty of Shimonoseki was signed.

16.2.4.2 Conduct of the War

What happens during this war? There are two aspects to it: the naval aspect and a land-war aspect which is fought in Korea and in China. The thing that really settles the war is the naval war, because in the Battle of the Yellow Sea these newly purchased top-of-the-line fleet of warships of Li Hongzhang's is almost completely destroyed by a smaller Japanese fleet. They come out of the harbor, in this case abreast like a cavalry charge—the commander of the fleet was a former cavalry officer as a matter of fact. The Japanese have smaller ships but generally faster. And they simply encircle, go around the heavier and slower Chinese ships and eventually shoot them and send them to the bottom. This is an enormous defeat. Among other things, it is only recently (that is, in the last few years) that China is able to build up another similar naval capacity. Of course at the time the Chinese fleet was the fourth largest in the world. It was also completely modern.

Now the reasons for that defeat usually given that there was corruption and the wrong shells were put on the wrong ships so that some of the guns would not fire and so on. I don't know if that's true. It's true that there was fundamental mistake in strategy overall and in the tactics. But I don't know if that really explains it. The defeat in this war is usually taken as a judgment on Self-Strengthening (the Foreign Affairs) Movement, that is to say, it was judged as a failure. Most historians have taken this stance. I am not really sure because it would seem to me that other historical contingences obtaining, the battle might have been not so one-sided victory or even could have resulted in a kind of naval stalemate, and thus not have resulted in the disastrous treaty that followed. In any case, it was the battle of the Yellow Sea that sealed the fate of the Qing Empire and that would result in the Treaty of Shimonoseki.

Li Hongzhang again went to Tokyo to do the negotiations. He was to a certain extent fortunate (this is April of 1895) in that he was shot in the eye by a would-be assassin (some kind of crazy nationalist). And this created a certain amount of sympathy for him. It gave him a political advantage of some sort. But the original hopes that Li Hongzhang had for diplomatic help from the British simply didn't materialize.

16.2.4.3 The Treaty of Shimonoseki

The Treaty of Shimonoseki had five major conditions, two of which were especially important. One that everyone knows about, is that the entire island of Taiwan was ceded to Japan. It became part of the Japanese empire. Two, there is a provision

that Japanese companies can buy and run factories within China, thus giving them many advantages in selling to the Chinese market as well as taking advantage of less expensive Chinese labor. And once Japan gets this privilege, which means that every other power that has the “Most Favored Nation” clause in its treaty with China gets it too. So this period of 1895–1900 is indeed very bad for Chinese native industry and enterprises.

16.2.4.4 Causes of the Defeat

To sum up, if there is a cause for defeat that could be ascribed, it would be that Japan, although much smaller, had in the preceding decades created a modern nation-state with a national consciousness. That is, all people living on the Japanese islands thought of themselves as part of one entity, which they identified with the symbol of the emperor and the government in Tokyo, whereas China did not have that somewhere. It’s much larger, but it did not achieve the same national consciousness, nor did it have the same success in modernizing in general. So during the war, for instance, the rest of China did not take part; it was only Li Hongzhang and forces that were under his direct control that engaged in actual hostilities with Japan. So this would be an example of a lack of national consciousness at the time.

16.2.4.5 Repercussions

Chinese defeat in this war had many permanent consequences. We can think immediately of five, the first of which would be in this case Chinese nationalism, that is, the nationalism of the modern sort. Prior to that time I think that it’s safe to say that most of the literate minds in the empire were still not used to this idea of a modern nation relating in equal terms to other modern nations. This defeat, however, was just so devastating psychologically that this small, usually considered a derivative state of the “dwarf pirates,” a former tribute state, could defeat the Chinese Empire was just such a shock to the literati that many of them immediately crossed the threshold from “culturalism.” That is to say, when they think of “*Huaxia*,” when they think of “*Zhonghua*,” they would think of essentially a culture, not necessarily a nation or a nation in the modern sense. After the war, they start thinking more in the terms of a modern nation; they start identifying with the government in Beijing. This is not the traditional way of looking at things at all. Well, it seems to me that if the most important thing is our culture, our values, they are not going to be preserved because the nation in which they obtain is going to be destroyed, is going to disappear. There was a great deal of fear of precisely that China was going to cease to exist as a unified whole. So they cross the line from the idea of preserving culture (“*bao wenhua*”) to “*baoguo*.” We could say from “*baojiao*” to “*baoguo*.” It’s an important dividing line that, precisely because of this disastrous defeat, many literate minds crossed.

A second equally as important in certain respects consequence of this was the birth of both revolutionary and radical reform movements. The revolutionary movement is

usually associated with Sun Yat-sen, who eventually ends up heading it. The radical reform movements are usually associated with Kang Youwei and Liang Qichao, Kang's student. Now they happened to be in Beijing at the time, sitting for the *jinshi* examinations when the terms of the Treaty of Shimonoseki were announced. And Kang Youwei's reaction was very interesting indeed. He wrote a petition to the throne, even though he had no right to in his position—he didn't hold an official post. He wrote a petition to the throne, and all of the candidates who sat for the examination signed it. A very significant event. So that is the beginning of a radical reform agenda. Again, it's because of a desperate concern about the preservation of the state that desperate measures were taken. Kang Youwei and Liang Qichao then set up an agenda that would call for even greater importation of Western organizations and institutions as well as other aspects. They would put this agenda into the 1898 Reforms.

Another immediate effect of the Treaty of Shimonoseki is the suppression of Chinese capitalism. That is, with this new provision of being able to own and run factories in China, the native Chinese entrepreneurs are going to have a much more difficult time in competing with foreign firms. This is more or less an immediate consequence.

Another longer-term consequence is what might be called the “birth of public opinion.” I just mentioned that Kang Youwei addressed this petition to the throne. This was an outrageous act because the affairs of the nation (the “*Guojia Dashi*”) were matters for the bureaucracy only, matters for the officials only to discuss. Kang Youwei at this point didn't have a real official position; he wasn't qualified to address the throne at all. And yet, because of the general outrage at the terms of the Treaty of Shimonoseki, he did this unprecedented act of sending a petition signed by all of the examination candidates to the throne. That was one event that could be said to be the birth of public opinion. In the immediate following years, certain media was created, newspapers primarily. Up until that time, there was a Japanese-run newspaper and not much else. *Wanguo Gongbao* was a periodical of sorts and originally a missionary publication. And aside from that, there wasn't much else in terms of mass media. After this, newspapers started being created. In this media print culture, you have the medium for expression of public opinion. It is now extremely important, whereas before the war, public opinion was not taken into consideration at all about anything. That is, the *Guojia Dashi*, or the affairs of the nation, were handled only by officialdom. So that petition could be considered the birth of Chinese public opinion.

Finally, this disastrous defeat left a great impression on the foreign powers: they were shocked as well as at the Chinese defeat, and therefore decided that China was a “lost cause.” It set off a scramble for concessions, a scramble for spheres of influence among the imperial powers. The most noted would be the Germans who seized the area around Qingdao. They were unable up until that time to establish any kind of presence in China, but they did so after China was exposed to the world as a weak power ripe for the taking, ripe for the slicing up. Even at this point, Britain, which had always been a general force for stability, gave up and demanded two concessions. They had a new concession of Weihaiwei and they demanded in Hong Kong four

hundred square miles of new territories (that's what is called, New Territories)—four hundred square miles of the Chinese mainland across the bay from Hong Kong Island. So even Britain threw up its hands and gave up. So the defeat led to a decided intensification of imperialist aggression because it was assumed that China was going to come apart anyway. And the usual jealousies between powers started operating.

Chapter 17

The Transitional Generation



After the Sino-Japanese War of 1894–1895, a new sense of urgency, which broadened the sphere of borrowing that I had mentioned, was present. A best example of the new urgency, which led to extreme reform, would be what we call the transitional thinkers of the 1890s, Kang Youwei, Liang Qichao, Yan Fu and Tan Sitong. These are people who grew up perfectly comfortable with Chinese culture, but when they came of age, Chinese culture became a question (that is, it was in question) primarily because of the conflicts that it was perceived to have between nationalism and national survival.

17.1 The Phenomenon of Rationalization

The phenomenon of rationalizing cultural borrowing is expressed in the Chinese case most often as “Western learning for mere utility and Chinese learning for the basics,” or “Chinese spirit and Western technology,” or “Chinese learning for the basics and Western learning for practical use,” or “Chinese learning for substance, Western learning for utility.” There are innumerable ways of translating the phrase. In Chinese, it’s *Zhongxueweiti, Xixueweiyong*.

17.1.1 Different Civilizations, Identical Formula

My emphasis is that this kind of formula is not at all unique to China, that it literally happens every place in the world as a reaction to, we’ll have to call, “modernization,” that is, rationalization of social and economic organizations and processes toward the ends of world mastery. That’s the general Weberian definition (definition of Max Weber’s) for this process. And I think it is still of some use today although it is somewhat out of fashion in Western academia. I have explored this topic in

some depths in a book that I had written some time ago in Chinese, which is *Anti-Modernization Thought Currents in World Perspective*. And in Western Europe, you have exactly the same formula arising. Of course, different terms are used.

But they usually have something to do with a division between what might be called the “software” of culture (that is, internal things, literature, customs, morals) for which there is no possible external criteria with which to judge, and then “hardware” of culture (that is, technologies of one sort or another for which there are objective criteria). So, in other words, you cannot compare the music of one culture with another, favoring one over the other, because there are no standards, absolute standards for what is “proper,” “good” music. On the other hand, if there is a difference in technology—let’s say, mule cart versus a railroad—then there is no question that the railroad is more efficient; there is an objective criterion involved.

17.1.1.1 German Romanticism

In Western Europe, it first comes up with the Germans. That is, to a certain extent, German Romanticism, its reaction to the French Revolution and French invasion. At that time Germany was made up of many smaller states. And in self-defense, I suppose you could say, because the French had the first truly modern nation-state and they utilized this new organizational device to invade Germany, the Germans would no doubt have felt, “Well, we have to have a nation-state in self-defense.” To a certain extent, that’s what happened, I suppose you could say, around the globe. The formation of modern nations is in defense of the various imperial powers that have through this organizational form been able to mobilize military, economic and political power more efficiently. So, in the case of the Germans, the same divisions took place. And precisely at the same time, there was a movement toward studying the language (the German language), and the German folklore (the customs of the people). In that book, in fact I made a list of contrasting terms, natural/artificial, state/society—that’s above a hundred terms long.

All of these terms and concepts appear in some way in the writings of critiques of modernity. This critique of modernity is ongoing and it starts from the very beginning, from the Enlightenment in Western Europe. So it is not just the last thirty/forty years with the rise of Post-Modernism, etc., that a critique of what they usually called the Enlightenment Project started. The German formulae usually ran along the lines of spirit versus matter in some fashion. That is to say, the German spirit, German literature, German music, German whatever, is superior but certain techniques, technologies (including the technology of the nation-state) have to be more or less imported. What is interesting to me, though, is that it is not just the Germans who have this reaction to modernization, that is, there are French thinkers who use exactly the same dichotomies. The only difference with the French thinkers or the British thinkers who make this critique is that they do not perceive the process of the rationalization as coming from an external source. That is the only difference.

17.1.1.2 American Experience

The American case is a very interesting one; that is, the “thinker” among the founding fathers of the United States of America is undoubtedly Thomas Jefferson. He was the most philosophical among them. And he had an ideal society that was based upon the American experience that he held in direct contrast to European society. The basic difference was that he saw the ideal society as landholding yeomen who would be educated, have their own land and form a democratic polity. In Europe, industrialization had already started and consequently, Jefferson held this up in contrast to his own ideal based upon the American experience.

However, he changed his mind later in life, primarily because the British (that is, this industrialized power) burnt down Washington, the capital of the United States during the War of 1812. After that, after the war was over, Jefferson wrote that, “Well, I’m afraid it won’t work. We do have to adopt European ways, because otherwise we cannot preserve our own nation.” To a certain extent, this is a direct parallel to what happened in China. That is, we’ve had this ideal of society, we’ve had these cultural ideals and practices, but we are going to have to change them because the polity (the nation-state), which contains these “soft” cultural practices, is incapable of survival given this present state. So what really changes things comes from the demands of nationalism. If there is a perceived conflict between the demands of nationalism and the demands of traditional culture, traditional culture would have to give way, according to the same reasoning.

17.1.1.3 Russia’s Cultural Borrowing

The rest of the world, let’s say Russia, produces similar formulae for cultural borrowing. In Russia, we have the Slavophiles, who again mark off the software of Russian culture as being superior but admit that certain hardware will have to be adopted from the West.

17.1.1.4 India’s Westernization

After that, in the non-West the most famous case is that of India, which at the end of the nineteenth century was producing formulae of exactly that sort, only referring to Indian traditional culture and the necessities of adopting certain Western institutions and ways. Some of these Indians become world-famous in fact. They go around the world, essentially carrying this message. So especially during that period, there is an idea of the East, (wherever that is) as being spiritually superior to the West (meaning Europe and North America). This is quite common. When we get to the cases of Japan and China, you have essentially the same formulae only in different terms because the particular cultural backgrounds of these countries are different.

17.1.2 Uniqueness of Chinese Rationalization

What makes the Chinese case so special is precisely what makes Chinese civilization unique. It has an unbroken, more or less, continuity of several millennia. It has a replication in certain respects of certain cultural principles throughout this long period of time. It maintains in one form or another a polity (a state). So the modern crisis which eventually produces this cultural formulae is more profound in China than any place else in the world. That's the chief difference. China is very big and very old. It's been very successful as a civilization and it's been extremely long-lived as a civilization. Therefore, its modern crisis of dealing with its past and its past culture (its cultural inheritance) is a far more profound question than that arises in Europe or the rest of Asia.

The very nature of Chinese culture would change because of the new environment. Once the Chinese nation was a nation among other nations, not the center of a cultural world, the demands on the culture were very different and the cultural values conflicted very often with the demands of the nation. You can put it this way: that originally Chinese culture (Chinese civilization) was assumed to be the only reasonable way that human beings can live. It wasn't argued over, it wasn't argued for, it wasn't defended, because it was assumed to be a universal world culture and it was so obvious. What happens during the 1890s is that that changes, that after this "transitional generation," no one can take for granted ever again that Chinese culture is superior, or that the Chinese cultural inheritance from the past is the only reasonable way for human beings to live. Rather, it is put up as in contrast to Western culture. Therefore, the maintenance of any cultural values has to be argued for. They can no longer be taken for granted.

One of the reasons why this generation of Chinese thinkers is called the "transitional generation" is precisely because they made that transition. They grew up comfortable with Chinese culture; they grew up assuming the same thing—that it is the only reasonable way for human beings to live, and they changed. They changed very, very profoundly during the period.

Nationalism and the demands of the nation-state are of course the most important way that the nature of culture changed. That is, from the late 1890s onward, there was a widespread notion that increased over time—that what had kept China from becoming rich and powerful as the Western nations had become was its traditional culture. This became most pronounced in the early decades of the twentieth century. Traditional culture started being perceived as an obstacle to and incompatible with nationalistic goals.

17.2 Kang Youwei

The key figure of this generation is Kang Youwei. He was a child prodigy and underwent a spiritual search, completed with retirement to a mountaintop. Before his ideas were fully developed, he visited treaty ports and they impressed him with their efficiency and orderliness. Then he started reading certain publications put out by missionary organizations, the Jiangnan Arsenal and so on. At this point, I think that a new vista opened to him. He accepted “progress,” that is, linear progress through time as a concept.

17.2.1 Kang's Writings

It was set very early he had adopted the attitude that China would have to have radical reform in its institutions, including educational and government institutions. His first written works were in support of this general idea.

17.2.1.1 A Study of the Forged Works of the Xin Period

In 1891, he published the *Xinxue Weijingkao* (*A Study of the Forged Works of the Xin Period*) referring to the short-lived period under Wang Mang between the two Han Dynasties. In it, he essentially tried to prove that the orthodox editions of the classics were forgeries. This is the general attitude of the New Text School. There was a division that starts, to a certain extent, during the Wang Mang period and Latter Han over the proper editions, the proper interpretations and commentaries of the classics. The Old Text is ironically newer than the New Text. It's that a certain set of allegedly inside the wall of Confucius' house. These books were written in the old-style script, and therefore were taken to be ancient, be older than the presently used versions, which were regarded as newer. So the old texts are actually the newer texts that emerge only after Wang Mang and during the Latter Han Dynasty. The characteristic of this New Text School is that it regards Confucius as more of a prophet; it has overall a more mystical religious quality to it. And therefore, what Kang was doing was showing that the New Text School's interpretations were the correct ones, and the New Text School's, because they are more religious and mystical, allow for more changes.

17.2.1.2 A Study of Confucius as Institutional Reformer

His next important book the *Kongzi Gaizhikao* (that is, *A Study of Confucius as Institutional Reformer*) would bring these ideas into sharper focus. That is to say, he argues that Confucius did not just edit the classics, he wrote them. He had in fact

written them all and intended them to promote institutional reform at the time. In other words, what the classics are all about is institutional reform. If Confucius were around today, he would back me in advocating extreme reformist lines and formulae for change. So in effect, extreme institutional change can't be morally bad because Confucius himself was engaged in exactly the same operation.

The core message in this book is that there are ruptures in history inherently, that great breaks in continuity occur. He uses some of the more cryptic ideas of the New Text School's, such as the *Tongsantong* (meaning going through the three periods), in which he interprets to mean that the three ancient dynasties themselves, the Xia, Shang and Zhou, were different; they all had their own institutional framework; there was enormous change that went on between them. In other words, he's arguing against a sense of continuity. Another expression *Zhangsanshi*, meaning the unfolding of the three epochs, predicted a future Utopia. In all of these cases, he is saying that inherent in the nature of history there is radical change. It is not unlike, I suppose, the notion that we had mentioned before in Buddhism of the Kalpa, the change in the Kalpa.

Kang, by the way, was quite devoted to Buddhism despite publicly abandoning Buddhism and so on. In fact, so were the other members of this generation, Liang Qichao and Tan Sitong. Yan Fu is, of course, an exception. He is decidedly devoted to Daoism, philosophical Daoism. But there is something about the role of the Bodhisattva that I think affects all of these people as well as others in Chinese history. That is, they perceive themselves as a kind of Bodhisattva, as saving the world, as after having achieved certain enlightenment, going back to save the world.

17.2.2 Kang's Career

Kang's career in a way started in 1895 when he wrote this petition, the "ten-thousand word petition"—that he submitted to the throne with the signatures of all of the examinees in Beijing at the time. In it, he advocates continuing the war, moving the capital but continuing the war, rejecting the treaty and instituting radical reforms of various sorts. He hinted in this memorial that "See, if we have done this a bit earlier, then we wouldn't have lost this war." That's essentially what he was hinting with other language. He gets the *Jinshi* degree and even though he had no right to, given his rank in officialdom, proceed to memorialize the throne. He did get noticed by certain progressive people, especially Chen Baozhen, who was the Governor of the Province of Hunan. So for a while, Kang Youwei was there running a school, called the School of Current Affairs (Shiwu Xuetang), in which he was propagating his ideas on radical reform.

Although his rank was so low that he was not qualified to send petitions or memorials to the throne, he continued to do so and gradually got to the emperor's ear. He presented his fifth petition in Beijing. And at that point, there were several factors that were in his favor. The first was that the Germans had seized the Jiaozhou area, the Qingdao area, and the scramble for concessions had then started in greater earnest. Secondly, he was perceived by the leader of the Southern faction, as so called, at

court, Weng Tonghe, as a possible instrument to use against the Northern faction. So even though he didn't have a high enough rank to actually have an audience with the emperor, eventually he did so.

Before that, Weng arranges a conference for high officials of the Zongli Yamen with Kang. Went something like this at least the more important parts:

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|---|--|
| The Manchu general Ronglu, | “The institutions of the ancestors cannot be changed.” |
| Kang, | “The institutions of the ancestors are used to govern a realm that had been theirs. Now we cannot preserve the realm of the ancestors, what of their institutions? It is precisely this kind of reasoning that if we don't change, there will be no realm passed down by the ancestors.” |
| Liao Shouheng, the President of the Board of Punishments, | “How should institutions be reformed?” |
| Kang, | “We should change the laws and regulations. The government system should be the first to be reformed.” |
| Li Hongzhang says, | “Well, are you saying that we should abolish all the Six Boards and throw away all the existing institutions and rules?” |
| Kang, | “The present is the time in which countries exist side by side. The world is no longer a unified one. The laws and government system, as they now exist in China, are institutions of a unified empire. It is these that have made China weak and ill ruin her. Undoubtedly, they should be done away with. Even if we do not abolish them all at once, we should modify them as circumstances require.” |

Then this is what he was saying: that the demands of nationalism were more important than the demands of cultural preservation and had to be satisfied first. Most people thought that Kang was a little bit crazy basically. But the emperor, after hearing of this discussion, was even more anxious to meet him, and so eventually did. He had an audience with the emperor in April of 1898. It lasted five hours, even though, the meeting itself, the audience itself, was against the laws and regulations. So Kang said that barbarians of the four corners were all invading us and their attempted partition was gradually being carried out—China would soon perish. It's the same message that the nation of China is going to perish unless we radically change the content of its culture, its institutions.

17.2.3 *The Hundred Days Reform*

The emperor was mightily impressed and the Hundred Days Reform, in which Kang and his group were in control, dated from June 11 through to September 21. It's actually 103 days but never mind. What they consisted of were reform decrees issued in rapid succession affecting all areas of government as well as education.

Perhaps the single most important ones had to do with education. The Eight-legged Essay was going to be done away with entirely and replaced by essays on current affairs. Western-style schools were going to be established, including an imperial university in Beijing, including a medical school of Western medicine. The schools in the provinces would be devoted to both Chinese and Western studies. The large private academies would be transformed into Western-style colleges; those in prefectures would become high schools and so on; those in counties would be turned into elementary schools. And there was another school for overseas Chinese. Aside from this, he was essentially calling for the abolishment of the examination system, its replacement with the Western-style school system, which in a way was the most radical of all. He also in these edicts called for the abolition of all sinecure and superfluous offices, in other words, to get the bureaucracy lean, make it more efficient, and in general simplify administrative procedures and cut the red tape down.

He also called for the encouragement of non-official gentry to participate in the governing process. In other words, there were general appointments of friends of his in government. There was general promotion of various aspects: technological modernization, railways industrial development, and commercial development, invention, tours of foreign countries by higher officials, simplification of the legal codes and preparation of things like a budget, which actually didn't really exist before in the same fashion.

To a certain extent, these reforms remind one of certain features of the Chinese past reforms in that it was from the top down and it claimed to be going back to the normalcy, to the true message of Confucius and so on. However, there was one extremely important break with the past, and that is the subject of improvement. Even though it was supposed to be going through the emperor, was not the emperor; the subject that was going to be worked for was the "national" subject, the nation of China.

Ironically, if you follow this reasoning, then the emperor would become irrelevant to this process entirely in the natural course of events. The Empress Dowager had always supported modern reform. And she certainly wasn't against technological innovations or anything of that sort. She sort of liked them. For instance, she loved photography and had her picture taken many times. So it isn't as though she was a cultural conservative who simply didn't want things to change, but she perceived in this reform movement a threat to her own power. She had retired nominally in 1889 and so to the *Yiheyuan*, to the Summer Palace, and yet she never let go of the reins of power. Her networks were still in place. Her agent Li Lianying was representing her to these networks. So she was still in control of much.

17.2.4 *Failure of the Reforms*

Now eventually, at the end of this period, she would stage a Coup D'État against the emperor, but she had a lot of support for doing so. The Coup D'État itself is extremely significant in that it marks very clearly a time beginning when people with the guns would have the last say. And this to a certain extent continued to the 1950s. That is to say, those who are in control of armed men are those who are the final arbiters of the government. Even though on the surface, it might look different. Anyway, she had a lot of support for this Coup D'État out there. You can imagine the number of people who were affected adversely by these reforms.

To start with, if the examination system was going to be in effect abolished—that's the way it looked, then anyone who had a degree from the old examination system was not probably in favor of these reforms. The officials and the clients who had sinecure offices, superfluous offices, which were to be abolished, would also be adverse to these reforms. All of those who had academies and temples that would become schools were naturally against these reforms.

There is another element, that is, Manchu fear of Han Chinese. That is to say, at this point, it was Han officialdom, regional officialdom that was really calling the shots. There's no question that they were in control. What the Manchu court had to say about things had been reduced considerably; what control they had over things had been enormously reduced. And as I said, it looked as though the Manchus themselves were being surrounded by Han officialdom. So it was easy for the Manchu fraction of the population to become paranoid under such circumstances.

Another factor was Kang Youwei and Liang Qichao's inexperience in politics. Kang was a very abrasive, arrogant personality. He offended people by his very nature. He had never held high office. He had no client base, no political base; he had know-how of his own. And therefore, he was easily in a position that he was naive about the way things actually worked in bureaucratic politics. This certainly was another factor in the Coup.

There was also out there in society a certain intellectual content of the opposition. It looked as though Kang was calling for violation of basic principles of civilized life. Some accused him of having no respect for sovereigns or fathers and of distorting the basic nature of the Three Bonds, the *Sangang*. And he was calling for popular sovereignty and more individual equality, so to a certain extent, they were not completely wrong about this. There was scholarly opposition in that even those who sympathized with the institutional reforms found it difficult to accept Kang's interpretations of the classics, which many found crazy. Even his sponsor in Hunan, Chen Baozhen, a supporter of 1898, commented that Kang's books had dangerous and undesirable implications. So what had happened during those 103 days, when the stream of edicts from the capital were issued to every place in the empire? Well, basically nothing. Only in Hunan, where Kang already had support (he had been running a school there, he was acquainted with the elite of that province) did any of these reforms actually get put into effect. For the rest of the empire, they were more

or less ignored. So there was no change that came from sudden, radical, from-the-top reform. And it was politically impossible to execute such a program.

With this Coup D'État, the emperor was imprisoned under house arrest of sorts out in the Summer Palace. The six of the reformers were caught and executed, the Six Gentlemen, *Liu Junzi*, as they ended up being called.

17.3 Tan Sitong and His *on Ren*

One of them, Tan Sitong chose to be caught, that is, like Kang Youwei and Liang Qichao, he could have fled but he chose not to. He chose in effect to be a martyr, making him a very interesting personality. Because as far as I know, he is the only one of the six who had an opportunity to flee but did not. Then let's discuss Tan Sitong first.

17.3.1 Tan's Interpretation of *Ren*

He has one major work that is left, which is called *A Study of Supreme Virtue*, or *On Ren*, *Ren Xue*, *ren* being the supreme virtue of Confucianism. Tan himself felt that he was operating within the Confucian tradition. He didn't see that he was breaking with the past at all. He simply pushed the idea of *ren*, being an internal, a subjective state of moral perfection, to its natural conclusion. It is the inner spirit, the inner spiritual condition that as in most neo-Confucianism leads to a linking up with the Dao of the cosmos. Remember the *Escape from Predicament* interpretation? This was like Puritanism, you are always anxious, but ever striving to achieve this linkage with the Dao of the universe, which would enable you to do anything. So in the end, he has *ren* serve as an ultimate ontological principle of everything. But he is at the same time self-consciously eclectic again. So God is the equivalent of *Tian*, of Heaven. The soul is *Ren*. It's Christ's soul. That is, Christ's soul was an expression of *Ren*. They are all one.

He's also self-consciously scientific. Again an expression of eclecticism. So he uses the, at the time, popular notion of "Ether," which was basically disproved by the experiments of Michelson and Morley, I think. He adopts this idea of an "ether" surrounding being in space and he tries to link up other modern things like electricity with traditional notions; that is, *Yin* and *Yang* produce electricity.

So what is the newest content of this book 仁学? You'd have to say that it was putting in opposition of the present state of Chinese culture represented by the rules of social behavior appropriate to status, namely the 礼教名教. Separating that which represented what Chinese culture was at the time from another notion that was real Chinese culture, he was able to distance himself from a present Chinese culture for obvious reasons. Of course he never argues this but by this method, he was separating the current state of culture from something more ultimately valid, and therefore the

current state of Chinese culture, even though it was based upon the classics and so on, was not eternal, that is, it was subject to change, and therefore subject to radical reform.

17.3.2 Sex—*The Real Shocker*

Sex is one of the real shockers of the book. He says that, “Well, why we call certain actions *yin lewd* for no good reason? It’s just a name. After all, it shouldn’t be regarded as reprehensible. A man or person guided by the internal possession of *Ren*, of perfect virtue, doesn’t necessarily have to be *yin* in these things.”

17.3.3 Individualism

Also an element that appears to a certain extent in all of the reformers’ thought is that of the individual—individualism. He is not himself an individualistic thinker or proponent of individualism, but like the others, he stresses the idea of releasing the natural individual energies of each person. He talks about the present state of Chinese culture, *lijiao mingjiao*, as being “nets” that tie the people down; you must break the nets and so allow the energies to flow freely. And there is a nationalist message in that if you are releasing individual energies of all individuals, then the sum total of national energies would be greater. It has a nationalist side as well.

17.4 Yan Fu

The next important figure of this generation we are going to discuss is Yan Fu, who is known primarily as a translator, a translator of important or even classic Western books. He would have immediate and enormous intellectual influence. You could say that at least in the earliest period he had more influence with the introduction of certain Western ideas than any of the other reform generation or transitional generation figures.

17.4.1 Yan Fu’s Career

Because of a reversal in family fortunes, Yan Fu could not follow the usual path to the examination system, degrees and officialdom. At that time, he went to the place that would offer him a scholarship, which happened to be the Naval School in Fuzhou. So he started as someone who felt a bit defensive about not having achieved a traditional

examination system degree, but he was assiduous in his studies of Western subjects. He was then sent to Britain for further study, where he remained for several years. He returned to China, and by the time of his return, he didn't do too badly in a sense that he was eventually appointed the Dean of the Naval School, the Beiyang Naval School. Yet he was continually complaining in his private correspondence about being kept on the outside—he was never one of Li Hongzhang's insiders. He always felt that he lacked true power, and he was resentful about it.

17.4.2 *Translations and Thoughts*

Perhaps we'll talk about the first one first because that has the most immediate and pervasive impact. The translation is a book by Thomas Huxley about Darwinism, about evolution. Now this book conveys the fundamental message of Darwin, that is, the evolution through natural selection, survival of the species and so on. But it does it in Social Darwinist form. That means that the evolutionary idea that reaches China will be in Social Darwinist form, not the original purely biological study that the *Origin of the Species* represented. This idea of evolution in just a few years after the publication of this book seems to have been adopted by absolutely everyone. That is, in just four or five years, there is everywhere a reference to, usually in a way of assuming that it is correct, evolution: the idea of progress through time, things are getting better and better and better. And the major message was, essentially the West represents evolution and something happened to this process in China. The rest of the world was not really paid attention to; it is the West and China that were always the focus of these discussions. And so we have the idea that something inherent in China somehow stopped this natural process that was supposed to be worldwide, that was supposed to be inherent in the nature of everything, including human beings.

Yan Fu essentially blames the ancient sages of China. He says our culture in China here exalts passivity, exalts avoidance of struggle, whereas the West exalts aggressiveness, exalts action, exalts struggle. It is precisely the opposite. The reason that Chinese culture developed in this fashion is because of the ancient sages which discouraged the development of people's capacities and inhibited once more the free flow of natural vital energies. This message is the first fundamental critique by educated insider, as it were, of Chinese civilization. It is squarely contrasting Chinese culture and Chinese society, and Western culture and Western society. And Chinese culture and Chinese society are found lacking because of its fundamental principles being wrong. This idea of evolution being a natural, ever improving, linear progression this way that is a universal principle of the universe, when applied to China, means that there are obstacles to this natural process and so this is Yan Fu's first naming of the corporate as the Chinese culture itself. And at this point, he is advocating just wholesale cultural borrowing from the West.

He translated several other classics of Herbert Spencer—Herbert Spencer is basing himself on the idea of evolution, and John Stewart Mill's *On Liberty*, Montesquieu's *De L'esprit des lois*, Jenks' *A History of Politics* and so on. But none of these had the

same enormous and immediate impact as his translation of Huxley's book, which as I said contained the fundamentals of evolution. It is truly amazing that almost immediately after this—a concrete example would be people's names started including terms and phrases from evolutionary doctrine. For instance, the famous May Fourth intellectual Hu Shih had his original name as Hu Shizhi, which is essentially "to be the fittest." It was directly from the notions of evolution. A lot of other people's names in the same period were that way. And everybody read it. Yan Fu's style was excellent, very classical Chinese. And his style was not going to affect much the way that the modern Chinese language, colloquial language was developed precisely because it was such pristine literary Chinese. That influence on the development of the later language would come from elsewhere.

As is the case very often, Yan in his old age became culturally conservative, that is, he became unwillingly a part of a worldwide trend after World War I. World War I presented the world with a spectacle of European or Western culture almost destroying itself and led to a widespread, broadly based critique or rejection of Western culture. Yan Fu, in the same way, after World War I tended to become again a cultural conservative and his focus returned completely to Daoism. Daoism, he had originally claimed, was perfectly coherent with or basically constituting the same entity as evolution, that is, the basic ideas of evolution were contained in Daoism and vice versa. Now, most people wouldn't agree with that, but that was the way he had understood it. The Daoist side becomes more and more important as he ages.

17.5 Liang Qichao

The next figure we will discuss is the very famous student of Kang Youwei, Liang Qichao. Liang, like Kang, was Cantonese, was also a child prodigy and also early had some visceral acquaintance with the West through contact with the treaty ports. He in the end was broadly the most influential of all in this group.

17.5.1 *Constitutional Movement*

Between 1900 roughly and 1911, his writings were read by much of the literate population of China. Everyone read him. He was arguing for a constitutional monarchy. That is, the major mission of the Kang-Liang "Protect the Emperor Society," for which they went around the world raising funds and so on, was that of creating a constitutional monarchy for China. This stood in direct opposition to the other movement that started immediately after the Sino-Japanese War of 1894–1895, that of radical Republican Revolution. So there was a competition between these two camps for that period roughly in 1900 and 1911. And for the most part, it was hard to say whether one side or the other dominated.

During this period, Liang wrote in such journals as *Qingyi* (*Public Opinion*) or *Xinmincongbao* (*New People's Miscellany*). These publications were the medium of conveying his ideas to the Chinese public. With them as well, he introduces a great amount of Western culture, information about the West. He did this through a partially new medium, that is, his writing style was not completely classical; it had elements of colloquial Chinese in it. His vocabulary that he was using to describe Western things would constitute in the future a major portion of the modern Chinese language, colloquial language. He got most of these terms from the Japanese because the Japanese had already put these various ideas into Chinese ideogram. So the Japanese language at this point had a considerable influence on the development of modern Chinese.

17.5.2 “People Made New”

His other important message is nationalism that people must shift their religions away from their immediate group, family or whatever, and put it on the larger group; the focus of loyalty was going to be the *qun*. There had to be a national loyalty, highly nationalistic population, before these other values—liberty, and equality and democracy—could be possible. He had a term that he used, *Xinmin*, a people made new, in which he placed great emphasis upon, placed great value upon the individual changing himself or herself. It sounded in one way very similar to old-fashion Confucian self-cultivation, except that in this case it was not just about morals of cultivation; it was cultivation of skills, of techniques. He wanted people to gain expertise in various fields; he wanted people to in essence become specialists in one thing or another. But these people would be energetic, independent and public-minded. That is loyalty to the group. All of these seem to be embodied in his term *minde*, which literally means “people’s virtue,” in which technical competence, a certain amount of self-restraint, nationalism and a will to struggle, would be the major components.

17.5.3 *Evolutionism*

Liang obviously felt that these qualities were the products of evolution, that is, the West had evolved these qualities and China should have. So he opposed the revolutionaries, the Republican Revolutionaries, simply basing himself on the doctrine of evolution that China’s present historical stage, its stage of evolution, hadn’t reached the point where it was ready to evolve into Republicanism. But he is consistent in that after 1912, after the establishment of the Republic, he sees evolution is only one direction, it’s forward, there’s no going back, so he becomes a Republican. That’s quite unlike several other former reformers or indeed revolutionaries, who become monarchists during the Republican period, Yan Fu, Zhang Taiyan, Liu Shipei, Kang Youwei. They remained monarchists.

17.5.4 Chinese Spiritualism and Western Materialism

In his old age, he too becomes, I suppose you could say, culturally conservative. He is part of that same worldwide reaction, adverse reaction, to Western civilization that occurs after World War I. He visits Europe immediately after the war has ended with a group of his students and talks to Western intellectuals who all tell him, “Oh my goodness, there is something inherently wrong with our civilization. It has the wrong values.” So in speaking to them about Chinese civilization, Chinese cultural values, it provokes this response among these intellectuals, “Oh, why didn’t you tell us about this before?”

So Liang returns to China and writes a series of essays called *Reflections on My European Journey*, in which he says essentially the same kind of thing that the Germans were saying before him and innumerable other people were saying. That is, China in spiritual matters is stronger than the West so the future world culture will be a blend of Chinese spirituality, which he finds welcomed by the intellectuals he spoke with, and Western material culture. In the end, he returns to a more culturally conservative stance, as do all of the others.

Chapter 18

The Boxers



18.1 Why Important?

It refers to a series of very dramatic events that took place in the year 1900 and our focus, as is the usual focus with the Boxers, is on what happened in Beijing. Why is this movement of any historical significance? In a way, it was not that much; it was not particularly significant in many respects.

Well, primarily the reasons that make it important are: first, it gave China a terrible reputation internationally. It tarnished of course the Manchu image as well, and in that sense it was an event that helped the Republican Revolutionaries.

Secondly, it was the last stand of Chinese conservatism. One could not move further into cultural conservative directions after this. It was the final moment that came immediately before the extreme reforms that the Qing court itself sponsored, when it returned to Beijing, of course.

Thirdly, it had a devastating aftermath in China, or the central government of China. The indemnity alone was of a great size. The capital was occupied for an extended period by foreign troops, so indeed was Tianjin, and so indeed were certain areas along the railroad. The foreign powers demanded punishment of the guilty, which meant certain high officials and Manchu grandees at court who had supported the Boxers. This was direct intervention into the political workings of another sovereign country. So all of these created a terrible aftermath. That's why we still talk about the Boxers today.

It is for historians of particular interest because it allows us to take a look inside rural society because there's not that much evidence of what was going on in rural society at this time. At least, in this case it would be North China rural society. The events are often used as a way of looking at rural society, the interaction between foreign imperialism and the Chinese government, and so on.

18.2 The Nature of the Boxers

Now what after all were the Boxers? This Western name seems to have stuck to them. Actually, this organization which eventually was called the *Yihetuan* got its name from a style of martial arts, the *Yihequan*. And so it was a direct transfer of the “*quan*” (boxing) to the English name. It was, however, nothing more than a typical dissident Buddhist sect, not very different from the previous dissident Buddhist sects that we knew about in North China. The only difference is that the Boxers didn’t have a millennial element; that is, they didn’t think that the world was about to undergo a great cataclysm very soon. They started off as primarily, actually an anti-dynastic organization as well as an anti-foreign organization. So the original motto of the Boxers was to *Fanqing Mieyang*, to overthrow the Qing and to wipe out the foreigners. This general situation eventually presented the court or local officials in the areas of Shandong and Shanxi and so on with the choice: either you are going to have to suppress them or you are going to co-op them. In the end, the co-option was chosen more often by local officials than suppression. So the motto then became to *Fuqing Mieyang*, to support the Qing (support the dynasty) and wipe out the foreigners.

18.3 Causes

18.3.1 Unusual Climatic Conditions

The organization wouldn’t have expanded so rapidly were it not for unusual climactic conditions. We are talking about the snowball metaphor again. What were those climactic conditions in North China? Many natural disasters occurred at the end of the nineteenth century. The Yellow River, for instance, shifted its course from one side of the Shandong Peninsula to the other, thus flooding everything in between. In 1899, you had plagues of locusts in Shandong that resulted in famine, drought and other natural disasters affecting the economic survival of large numbers of people in North China.

18.3.2 Hostility Toward Foreigners

It was also at this time that the Grand Canal, which ran through Shandong and Hebei, was so silted up that it was closed. Now to a certain extent, this event of closing the Grand Canal was blamed upon the foreigners because there were now steamships that could ship the grain up the coast to Beijing and Tianjin. So that would be yet another factor. Because these ships were foreign inventions, many people blamed the closing on the foreigners. This was after several decades of continued suspicion

and outright hostility to foreign technological innovations. In 1874, foreigners built a railway in the Shanghai area. The government had to pay them to buy the railroad. Why? Because the popular opposition to building the railroad across the land ruining the *fengshui* (the geomantic conditions) was so strong. And throughout, there were considerable popular rural hostility toward things like telegraph lines as well as railroads.

On top of this, there were several decades of what in Chinese were called *Jiaoan*—"Missionary Cases" is the usual translation. In other words, a missionary would be attacked or in some way the church or residence would be damaged. Behind that event and other events that took place through the 1880s and 1890s is a tension between rural local elites (or just any local elites) and the missionaries. The missionaries were perceived of as not just being foreign, not just being strange or outlandish or exotic, but also a threat to the status of these local elites because foreign missionaries had certain power. They have the power of their governments in back of them. So if they were harmed in some way, the imperialist government would take some direct action. It's "Gunboat Diplomacy," as it is often called. Now even if they didn't take direct action, they could pressure the Qing government to take some action. So missionaries' position as a privileged position was much resented.

Secondly, they put on the airs of person who would have superior position in society. They rode in sedan chairs, and perhaps most importantly, they established their own patron-client networks. Then, the second of their resources were brought into play, that is, economic resources. The congregations were sometimes called "Rice Christians" in that the members of the congregation would derive immediate and direct economic benefits from membership in the church, whatever church it was. They also were active in various other fields: the medical fields (Western medicine and hospitals) and schools (schools for the blind and schools for women). And all of these were regarded as quite strange indeed.

It is especially the medical field of missionary activity that causes the most suspicion. In the case of the Tianjin Massacre, as it is called, we had the local populace hearing rumors, perhaps reading certain woodcut pamphlets that were put out by the local elite as well, claiming that the nuns were collecting babies in order to use their body parts. They didn't have an orphanage; they had a body part-collecting machine. To a certain extent, you can see what was happening. According to a Catholic doctrine, at least at the time, any unbaptized infant would go into Limbo, would not go into heaven, as a baptized infant would. So very often, missionary organizations would actually pay money to take dying infants in and baptize them. But as far as the locals were concerned, they saw babies going into the establishment, which of course was with secrecy and thus liable to setting off many rumors, and they saw dead babies coming out. A general rumor about Christian missionaries was that they scooped out eyes because they needed eyes to perform certain ceremonies, in the same way that they needed infants' body parts for other ceremonies.

The other most common rumor which is cast upon any organization to which you are hostile is that of sexual promiscuity. So in these pamphlets, this would be a good example—a picture of a pamphlet page. The foreigners and the Chinese

Christians were always shown with “green hats” or “green heads.” The foreigners of course were the sheep, are the “*yang*”, because it was homophonous with the word for waterborne foreigner. They were always supposed to be sleeping with each other’s wives, and Chinese wives would have to submit to the sexual demands of the foreign missionaries. This of course was utter nonsense, but it was one of those areas where it was easy to believe if you don’t know anything at all about what was going on. This kind of aspersion is extremely common. It takes place everywhere. In the Chinese case of course, it was much easier to throw these aspersions around because missionaries in their inner compounds were cut off from public view.

In the same way, medical treatment traditionally in China was performed more or less in the open. There was no one sealed-off place, a hospital where medical treatment would be performed or a clinic surrounded with walls and so on, where medical treatment would be given. It was rather in the home or in some other semi-public venue. This new innovation of the hospital led to a suspicion that any number of evil things might be going on inside this secret place. It’s kind of funny. It was Li Hongzhang who was assigned to investigate the Tianjin Massacre. And he did. He went down to the basement of the churches and found no eyeballs or other body parts and he reported that specifically, because the rumors had been so pervasive that the Christian churches would be collection points of body parts that were required for various evil rites.

To return to the Boxers themselves, in the years 1898–1899, they were spreading very rapidly. As I said, there were these climactic incidents that would allow for this. Foreign missionaries had been on the scene for some time, but in that period, it was immediately after the seizure of Qingdao in Shandong Province, Qingdao and the surrounding area, on a pretext of a murdered missionary again. And this caused a considerable widespread anxiety about what the missionaries would do next. Moreover, their presence was increasingly felt in the countryside. Protestant missionaries had not entered the Chinese countryside until after the 1860 Treaty Settlement. After that, there were various organizations that organized establishment of missionary stations, as they were called, in the interior, that is outside the treaty ports, in rural society more or less.

In any case, the organization spread very rapidly in 1898–1899. They were burning Christian churches, killing a few missionaries and killing Chinese Christians. They were after a complete removal of any foreign traces or influence. For instance, Mr. Liang Shuming, who I interviewed many years ago, of course, told me that he remembered very well when the Boxers entered Beijing. He was of course a child at the time. He was attending a *Yangxuetang*, a foreign-style school. He was in first grade, learning English and so on. And so when the Boxers arrived, all the students very quickly burnt all of their foreign subject textbooks, lest they be attacked by the Boxers. And the school that he was attending was burnt down by them. So it was not just the people, it was also things, foreign things that were the subject of this drive for a final solution to the foreigner aggression problem. That is, we’ll just wipe them and their traces all out.

Because of this background of hostility, especially among the elite, to Christian missionaries, this movement promised that finally we would be able to overcome the

foreigner problem, these intruders, at least as far as the elites were concerned, who were attempting to threaten our own position in society by establishing their own, patron-client networks by putting themselves forward as a member of an elite.

18.4 The Government's Attitude

The provincial government's attitude toward the Boxers really depended upon the personal views of the governor. And a culturally conservative governor who was generally anti-foreign would seek to support the Boxers as an organization. Yu Xian, such a conservative person, was the governor of Shandong and told to investigate and suppress the Boxers; essentially he came back to the court with the answer that, "No, no, no. These are not bandits. These are local militia; they are *tuanlian*; they are the same kind of local militia that kept order and suppressed the rebellions in the mid-nineteenth century. So they are not a *Quan*, a fist, a martial arts organization; they are a *Tuan*, they are a local militia." Some modern-minded governors of Shandong, say, Yuan Shikai did indeed want to suppress them and did so while he was in office. But in general, the Boxers were allowed to develop. There's not much evidence that any governor aside from Yuan Shikai took a really firm stand or hand with them. And actually he sent troops to suppress them.

So that was the situation at the beginning of the year 1900. The court was discussing the matter. And as usual, the Empress Dowager Cixi was not revealing her own opinions. She was, as usual, trying to balance one faction against the other, and she herself was holding her cards quite close to the chest. She was not letting other people know her state of mind, but was continually asking for opinions of this matter from other court officials.

18.5 The Progression of the Boxer Events in Beijing

In May of 1900, the atmosphere of anti-foreignism was getting extremely intense. This alerted the local legations, the diplomats in Beijing, to start looking for help, that is, reinforcement of the legation guards of the military. At the same time roughly, it's the month of May and June especially that you see the unfolding one event after another to the final denouement when the Empress Dowager declares war on all the powers, on all of the foreign nations represented in Beijing.

So before that she, as I said, was not so free with her own opinions. And for several weeks before the legation siege and so on, the Boxers were going around Beijing, sometimes being invited into the homes of the elite. It became fashionable to take up this martial art among elite (court ladies and other members of the elite). So at that point, the Empress Dowager was indirectly acting in favor of the Boxers. One of the reasons for this was that in June, a forged document was presented to her, I guess, by Prince Duan that alleges to have been an *ultimatum* from the foreign

powers, stating that the emperor should be immediately restored to power. Now this hit her in a vulnerable spot. When the Coup D'État of 1898 occurred, the foreign powers were very unhappy about the event, and in fact put pressure on the court to insure the emperor's safety. So this was quite irritating, as one can imagine, to the Empress Dowager.

So with that background, when she is shown this forged document, that kind of shoves her over the edge (but again not immediately). There are a series of events that take place, that are set off by this attempt to bring to the foreign legation from the ships off the coast in Tianjin. So they start landing in Tianjin in early June. They go up the railway about midway and are stopped by the Boxers. The railroad line is cut and so these return to Tianjin. So these are the pressures. The foreign legations are getting more and more nervous. The Empress Dowager is getting more and more painted into a corner. She cannot at this point actually try to suppress the Boxers in that they are now a presence in Beijing and a lot of people do feel that their magic, their skills could be the final solution to the foreigner problem. The Empress Dowager of course is not all that convinced, but it really makes no difference. She says, "If we cannot rely upon their magic, can we not rely upon the people's hearts?" That is to say, the masses of people. There is, I think, very central to the Chinese way of looking at things—this faith in the power of the aroused masses. This of course is related to the "Mandate of Heaven" notion.

So the Empress Dowager at this point must have been thinking that this is one way that the Manchus can get around the surrounding Han officialdom to identify directly with the masses of the people because at this point, as we have been saying, the court is not all that omnipotent at all. It doesn't really have much power outside of North China itself. It's only certain soft power that it can use on regional officials, but not really that much hard power. There are certain army units in the vicinity of Beijing that indeed the Empress Dowager herself can control. But then further away from Beijing you get, shakier the allegiance of officials and army commanders get.

So the more dramatic event is on June 14, I believe. The minister from Japan is assassinated. For whatever reason, it just makes the legations further nervous but nothing else arises from that because the legations are still expecting this relief column to come in from the coast.

It's the assassination of the German minister Von Ketteler on the 20th of June that sets off the war between China and Europe, and Japan, and the United States and so on. Von Ketteler is assassinated by Boxers on the streets of Beijing. And the next day, having painted herself, as I said, into something of a corner, the Empress Dowager officially declares war on the 11 powers. She herself and the rest of the court were driven from Beijing by the Franco-British force that occupied Beijing in 1860. So there was a general buildup of hostility on her part. As I mentioned, perhaps the most important element was this forged document of demands that supposedly came from the foreign powers. The false demand was that the emperor be restored to power. That was really her vulnerable spot emotionally.

Well, in any case, this declaration of war is indeed issued. But the southern viceroys, the people who actually controlled most of China, when confronted with

this and questioned about it by the foreign legates, respond that this is not a real declaration of war, that what has happened is that a local group has staged an uprising in Beijing and are making trouble there and control the area there. So this is a “rebellion.” It’s not an official declaration of war by China on the powers. So that’s the fig leaf that the southern regional officials put on the situation. But the rest of China, of course, does not respond. The action is taking place almost solely in Beijing and of course in a few areas of North China where the Boxers are, you know, still active. If there are any missionaries in those areas, they might have been killed at this time as well.

So in this situation, the legations themselves are waiting for the relief column to reach Beijing and rescue them. It’s extremely interesting that during this time there was secret communication between certain generals and the legation. There was apparently food and medicine sent to them. Because even though they were of course under direct control of the court, they were not convinced this was a very good idea and they were hedging their bets.

In any case, of course after 55 days the relief column does indeed arrive and so the entire city is now under foreign control. In the meantime, the Empress Dowager and the court go in disguise, incognito, to the city of Xi’an. Now for the first time in her life, the Empress Dowager and the court, as far as that goes, get a taste of the life of ordinary people. Of course, they are put up in the best places that are available along the way, but she was observing firsthand the life of ordinary people and so indeed was the rest of the court.

18.6 Repercussions of the Boxer Movement

The repercussions of the event are considerable, as I said, in the Boxer Convention that settles the matter between the foreign powers and the Qing court.

The court is going to have to pay 67.5-million-pound indemnity to the various powers collectively. And this more or less dooms any possibility that the court itself could ever finance any large-scale modernization projects or industrialization projects. Of course this money is lent to the court by the foreign powers, so the court is really in thrall to them, just servicing the loan, paying the interest. So this is an important part of the treaty, of the settlement.

The second is that the foreign powers demanded that in those areas where the Boxers were strongest and most prevalent, the degree quotas of the examination system be lowered. That is, they are going to punish the entire area by taking away local degrees.

Thirdly, they demanded the punishment, in some cases, execution, of those officials who supported the Boxers. There’s a good long list of them that eventually is negotiated down to a lesser number. But this, of course, represents a direct intervention into the government, into the politics, of another country by the imperialist powers.

As I said, it does create a tarnished image of China abroad and it lasts for a good long time.

There is one, I suppose you could say, good side, in that the United States first, and I think somewhat later Britain, use that money from the indemnity to give scholarships to Chinese students to study in the United States. There are many, many famous Chinese scholars who were Boxer-indemnity scholars. That is, they went to the United States to study on these funds. Moreover, it is during this period that the United States emerges even more clearly as being against actual territorial grabs in China. "Open Door" notes by Secretary of State John Hay are issued and sent to all of the involved nations, essentially calling for an equal playing field and not a territorial dismemberment of China. Because at this stage, remember, a lot of foreign powers felt that they had their right to seize Chinese territory, especially the Germans. The Germans were the most aggrieved because their ambassador was the one murdered. Why the Japanese didn't get into this, I'm not sure.

But the German Kaiser Wilhelm was absolutely livid with anger. He issued an absurd statement; he told the German troops going to China, "You must inflict such damage that no Chinese will ever again raise their eyes to a German." Truly crazy stuff. It was Kaiser Wilhelm, by the way, who invented the term "Yellow Peril." I think it regarded to precisely this. He himself in the cartoon *Yellow Peril*, for instance, is in the guise of the Archangel Saint Michael, pointing to, across a distance, a fiery Buddha in the air, whereas closer to this mountain that they are standing on top of is a typical European countryside. In back of him are figures representing the various other European powers. It is Kaiser Wilhelm who is in the forefront and holding a flaming sword; he is putting himself into the position of being defender of Western civilization against the threats and depredations of East Asian civilizations, I guess. Anyway, Kaiser Wilhelm was not at all rational in his response. But the Germans were indeed the most hated. They acted the most nasty. These punitive expeditions that they sent down into the countryside were again somewhat horrific.

This was perhaps this single most important event that sets the court onto the path of extreme reform. That is, perhaps without this disaster, this catastrophe, they would not have been so ready, or the Empress Dowager would not have been so ready, anxious to put a reform program into place. And indeed, that's the last Qing reform program starting in 1904 and then onward, which includes very radical steps, such as the abolition of the civil service examination system. These are very very important events that change forever after the nature of Chinese society.

Chapter 19

Revolutionary Intellectuals 1898–1911



19.1 Returned Students

We are going to talk about the Republican Revolution of 1911. For the preceding decade, the Republican Revolutionaries were active in one way or another, and the most important segment of them were all returned students from abroad. That is, this particular group is going to assume enormous importance from then on.

19.1.1 *Strong Nationalist Consciousness*

They are the most nationalistic for good reason. In fact, you might imagine yourself abroad. When you are in another country, that's when you start feeling very much a member of your own country, a citizen of your own country. And it is this element that makes the returned students so nationalistic. The one thing that the returned students shared was being Chinese. Up until that point, the notion of every individual having a relationship to the government in Beijing was not all that prevalent. It grew through the population gradually during this period and continued later. So that's the first aspect of these returned students.

19.1.2 *The Idea of Evolution*

There's a second aspect and the second important part of the mentality of perhaps all Chinese intellectuals at the time. I have mentioned this before; it is the idea of evolution. Nationalism and Evolutionism are two very important components of young intellectuals' thought, especially returned students'. The image that they have in their mind, as I said, is that evolution has somehow stopped in China. The West represents normalcy and the evolutionary course of things. And the West's cultural

forms, institutions and so on represent the most evolved state. It is during this decade that you start seeing occasionally the notion that China might be able to progress faster, to leap over the usual period of transition, by adopting the latest, the state-of-the-art institutions and ideologies. And this notion does not ever go away I think, that if we adopt the latest form of things, then we'll be able to go from this backward position immediately to a forward position. We'll leap ahead by this adopting of the most advanced, the most evolved, the state-of-the-art and the newest of things in general.

When these students return from abroad, they go on the notion that they can gradually change consciousness and so effect a republic, a modern revolution. As I said, the institution of a republic is often considered, from the writings of the revolutionaries of the time, the latest, state-of-the-art form of government. And very often this notion is linked together with the idea of survival of the fittest. There is a piece that I'm thinking of right now by Hu Hanmin, which makes that argument very explicit that everyone knows that republicanism is a superior tool, is the newest kind of government form, and it is this way if we adopt this new government form, we'll be able to preserve the race, really to "*baozhong*"—that is the word used. It's a direct reference to Evolutionism. So these two ideas are very often put together in the writings of the Republican revolutionaries.

19.1.3 Provincial Attachments

While these students are abroad, however, they might increase their national consciousness but they certainly do not hang out together as "Chinese". They might occasionally see other Chinese students who are not from their home area, but the revolutionary organizations that are formed are usually along provincial lines. Their immediate association even within China is provincial. So the students hang out with their fellow provincials for good reasons of course. They will be used to the same food, they speak sometimes the same language, and they are more comfortable with fellow provincials. But this meant that the revolutionary organizations formed by them would tend to be along provincial lines as well.

19.2 Sun Yat-Sen

And so one of the important roles that Sun Yat-sen will perform is to bring together worldwide these various provincial groupings. I think that most people know something about Sun Yat-sen.

19.2.1 Family Background

He's from one of those four counties above Macao in the map. At the time, his county was called Xiangshan, now named after him. Anyway, Sun is then in an area that regularly exports people to the Americas and he himself is such an example. That is to say, he really grows up and is educated in the West or in Western-style schools. He goes to primary school in Honolulu, Hawaii, where his brother has already established himself.

19.2.2 Xingzhonghui

His first organization, the Xingzhonghui, is organized abroad in Honolulu, not in any place in China. I think primarily because of the Sino-Japanese War of 1894–1895, he becomes committed to the idea of Republican Revolution, of establishing a new governmental form and of course overthrowing the Manchus. So he indeed gets in contact with some of these triad groups/societies, and with them stages uprisings in areas of Guangdong primarily. And so naturally, once he is involved with an uprising, he is forced to flee China. He flees abroad. But he really isn't all that famous. There are several figures who are operating at this time. Once he leaves China, he becomes, I suppose you could say, in the company of an international group of revolutionaries of one sort or another. Anarchists, for instance, were very prevalent in the earliest part of the twentieth century.

What happens to make him famous is that he is kidnapped in 1896 in London. That is, he arrives at London. He's lured into the Chinese Embassy and then locked away in a room. Now it so happens that his previous teacher from medical school days in Hong Kong is in London (Dr. Cantile, his name is). He gets word out to Cantile that he is imprisoned in the Chinese Embassy and is about to be shipped back for execution. Cantile gives this to the press and then there is an uproar because the Chinese Embassy is violating British sovereignty by imprisoning Sun. And so he is released and also becomes overnight famous because of this one incident. So he spends the rest of his time from that incident to the end of 1911 basically traveling the world raising money for revolution.

19.2.3 Style of Leadership

One aspect about him that is certainly remarkable: he is always optimistic and enthusiastic. This probably is the feature of his personality that led to his success. He had confidence: "we can do this," "we can indeed overthrow the Manchus and organize a Republican government." He was just brimmed with self-confidence, an important

factor in any leadership. He had a certain charisma that was the basis of his organization, and very often the basis of the contributions that overseas Chinese make to him and his organization.

19.2.4 Three Principles of the People

At the beginning of the twentieth century, his revolutionary organization was not doing as well among overseas Chinese as the Protect the Emperor Society. Kang and Liang after all had been officials. They could come into town with a reputation as great scholars, wearing their robes and so on, very impressive to overseas Chinese students. Sun, on the other hand, didn't have a degree. He then sets out to create the message which eventually becomes the Three Principles of the People, the *Sanminzhuyi*. And he puts this together in direct response to the reactions of the overseas students to him. The content is quite a mixture of elements: Henry George's single tax notion, which was relatively popular at the time, and other elements that were indeed current at that time. It was of course emphasizing democracy and the economic welfare of the people as well as nationalism. Every one of the Republican Revolutionaries as well as the reformists were highly nationalistic, of course.

Some notions that Sun has are similar to others that come later, for instance, the idea of China having the capacity to leap transitional periods directly into a more advanced stage. It was because China was poor and blank, because China in that day was a pre-industrial class formation and had other advantages that would enable it to leap forward, as it were.

19.2.5 Tongmenghui

In any case, Sun is having some success after he starts putting together an ideology with the overseas Chinese students. "*Tongmenghui*" is the revolutionary "alliance" (*Tongmeng*) because it represents a final alliance between these various smaller provincial groupings. He's able to do this partially because of a misunderstanding about him; that is, it was much rumored among overseas Chinese students that he was himself a high-ranking secret society member, a triad member, perhaps the supreme triad leader. He had networks to triads throughout China. Of course he wasn't; he had association with these triad organizations, but he very often was taken advantage of by them. He'd give them money and they wouldn't show up for the uprising, things of that sort. And so, you couldn't say that any of this was true, but the reputation was what counted. Now these overseas Chinese students are bookworms. All they have done throughout their life is study. All they have had acquaintance with are books. So the notion of staging armed uprisings, of overthrowing the Manchus by armed force, causes some anxiety among them because they have no notion about

the “muscle” end of the revolutionary business. It is Sun’s alleged connection with the muscle end, with the triads, that stands him in good stead.

Sun, as I said, travels the world, sometimes living extremely simply. Well, he’s raising money. He would stay in the back room of a laundryman’s house, for instance. He was not traveling the world in luxury. He was traveling the world in poverty for the most part and sacrificing everything for the revolution. When the revolution finally happens, he is in fact abroad in Denver, in the United States.

19.3 The Wuchang Uprising

The uprising in Wuchang on Oct. 10 is one that to a certain extent was unexpected. There was a planned uprising but it happens before the appointed time because another accident occurs—somebody shoots somebody, somebody shoots his platoon sergeant. Therefore, again, they are painted into a corner. They have to act immediately, and so do so. They succeed in taking over that particular garrison.

And the interesting aspect of this entire process is that almost immediately the southern provinces start declaring independence. They declare the independence of their province. Now I had always thought that perhaps this was because of the patterns of provincial autonomy that were established in the nineteenth century, so it came natural to the provincial local elites to establish a provincial entity. To a certain extent, I think it might have been in response to the attempts by the court after 1905/1906 to expand its own interests. Immediately before the uprising, in Sichuan in 1910, there are riots over railroads, but the point is they could be interpreted as a clash between the “center,” Beijing and local elites. So the readiness with which provincial elites rushed to declare independence is something to be noted and probably explained by this reaction to the center’s, however, feeble attempts to once more constitute a true political center.

Sun arrives in time to be inaugurated the first provisional president. But all provinces have not all declared independence. The northern provinces are still under control, somewhat, of the court. Actually, they aren’t. They are under control of the military commanders essentially, who are in turn students and protégés of Yuan Shikai.

Yuan Shikai was close to the Empress Dowager, and he was as a confidant of the Empress Dowager. He was the creator of modern-style armies, that is, the 新军, the new armies, the really state-of-the-art Chinese armies that were being organized at the very end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century, were under his guidance. He was also the commandant of the North Sea Military Academy, which in turn meant that the officers of these new armies would be formalistically his students, and very often people whom he had raised up himself, his protégés. So when the Empress Dowager dies, so does Yuan Shikai’s career. There are other factions at court who remove him. When they are confronted with an independent South, a declared Republic in Nanjing, the court has no choice but to bring Yuan Shikai back. Now the best armies in the country are still these northern armies. The

Southern provinces start enlisting provincial armies but they would not quite be a match militarily to the more professional, better armed armies of the North.

That's the situation that Sun finds himself in. He sees that if he going to persist as a president, then there would be outright civil war with Yuan Shikai and with the North. So he's ready to concede to Yuan Shikai the presidency if Yuan Shikai would get the court to abdicate. So Yuan Shikai is something of a person in the middle here. He could play both ends against the middle. Because he could tell the court that the Republicans in Nanjing are adamant about abdication; he could tell the Republicans that the court is adamant about his continued leadership. And so in the end, the court does abdicate and he becomes the next president. Sun Yat-sen simply steps aside for this purpose. He allows Yuan Shikai to be elected more or less as the president.

19.4 Nature of the Revolution and the Early Republic

This event changes the character of the new Republic in that the president is not quite cognizant of what representative democracy means. He still has the notion that as the head of the power pyramid he should be able to do whatever he wants; otherwise what use is there in being a president? So he doesn't regard the parliament as anything that he should have to deal with. The Guomindang is basically reorganized—that's the heir to the Tongmenghui (the Revolutionary Alliance)—and under the leadership of Song Jiaoren, for the election in March of the new parliament. So Song Jiaoren is quite effective as a political organizer, and the Guomindang wins a great majority of the seats in parliament. So we have at this point a possible conflict between the parliament and Yuan Shikai, who has this notion that he doesn't have to be accountable to any parliament, that he could name whoever he wants to his cabinet, and take whatever actions he wants without the backing of parliament. His own attempts at organizing political parties don't quite work very well. And so this is the situation that will lead eventually to the failure of the early Republic.

There were other problems with it. For instance, the notion of "party," of political party, solidarity was not there completely. That is, even the word for party, 党, had unpleasant overtones. In classical literature, for instance, this was regarded as "forming a faction," which is generally not a good thing and so many of the members of parliament belong to more than one party. They didn't have quite the same thing. Their notion of representative democracy is that people would vote for them because they are just such great people, they are so impressive, emulatable and admirable that the people would vote for them on those grounds, whereas in a real democracy people vote for the candidates according to what the candidate can do for them, for the public in general. So this is the basic difference between the psychology of the early Republic politicians and of that existing in the Western Europe and the United States. So this kind of psychology is obviously more traditional than modern.

19.4.1 What Hadn't Changed

There are other aspects to the revolution that didn't change anything. The usual point that the historians make in their critique is that there was no involvement of the masses, of the rural masses, although some secret societies did join. In fact, secret societies become more important after the overthrow of the dynasty is achieved than they were previously. The local elites are in the Republic even more out of control than they were before the revolution.

19.4.2 What Had Changed

There's no social revolution that occurs, but a good deal of symbolic change. The single most important thing that changes overall is that the emperor is removed, the monarchy is gone forever. Not that a great number of people, especially in rural areas, didn't expect it to return shortly. There was always that expectation that a new emperor might emerge. But for the most part, that's the key event. Without the monarchy, then much of traditional notions of morality, of what the polity consists of, of what the government is supposed to do, changes. And the religion of *Tian* 天 is gone. There's no more "Pope" to head it.

The other aspects probably aren't as important. What replaces the emperor, at least in the ideological realm, is the notion of "the people," that is, the people's name would be used forever after to authorize other power holders. Now this has certain precedence, even roots, in Chinese tradition because there is a notion of Populism in traditional Chinese thought, which, as we had said, links to the Mandate of Heaven and the ideas the masses are the representatives of Heaven in this world, and so on. So there is already this notion and I think that after this, no matter what type of power holder emerges, there will be a rhetoric of Populism that "the people" become the final symbol of legitimacy.

Other traditional notions were still present. For instance, the notion that hierarchy is essential and so respect for authority in hierarchies was still there. The question was, during the Republic, who has it? Who has real authority? Who has true legitimacy? And this will be a question that's open. Once you remove the final authorizer, the emperor, who is connected with the final legitimizer, Heaven, being able to authorize power holders, then it's somewhat an open question as to who deserves authority. In general, you could say that there is a lack of consensus on the general legitimacy of these new institutes, parliaments and cabinets and political parties. That would be, to a certain extent, to be expected.

19.5 Yuan's Dictatorship

To return to Yuan Shikai. He has had a very bad image in Chinese history among Chinese and foreign historians because he is regarded as the betrayer of the Republic, because he tried to make himself emperor, to create a new dynasty. And he's also regarded as the father of the warlords since so many of the militarists of the time were originally his protégés or students. On the other hand, we could look at him as a modernizer. He was always in the forefront in modernizing this or that, including such institutions as the police and other such modern-style institutions. And he was certainly a very strong nationalist as well.

One thing that happens immediately upon the Republic having begun is a great deal of disorder and fractious disputes. Banditry, for instance, starts increasing not later in the so-called Warlord Period, but in 1912. I've read innumerable Local Gazetteers that essentially state that "Yes, the banditry is very bad in our area and this is the way it developed. It developed at the beginning of the Republic as a great rise in disorder." So to give Yuan Shikai another interpretation or see him in another light, you could say that in the end he was still a strong nationalist. And he was modern minded, except in the political realm.

The story of his presidency is a progress toward this attempt at restoring the throne; that is, he starts off being opposed by the Nationalist Party (Kuoimintang or KMT). The Nationalist Party stages an uprising, the so-called Second Revolution in 1913. So he's able to put that down and he outlaws completely the Nationalist Party, the Guomindang from essentially existing. Then after that he has the effrontery to dismiss parliament altogether and has himself declared dictator for life; that is, not emperor, but at least as far as his life is concerned, he is going to be in charge. The monarchical movement had more to do with the symbolic nature of the monarchy, and then of course to do with his offspring. He had by December 1914 been able to place his men, his students, into most of the important military governorships. At the beginning of the Second Revolution, for instance, there were some military governors, some militarists who were on the Nationalist side. This provokes Sun Yat-sen to reorganize the Guomindang into the "Revolutionary Party," as he termed it. It is much more tightly organized an organization and not at all geared to the promotion of elective, representative democracy or systems of that sort; rather the emphasis was on a tight unity of the party and its historic mission of saving China as a nation.

So by the time you get to 1915, Yuan Shikai proceeds to his ultimate goal. Even before that, in December of 1914, he travels in an armored car to the Temple of Heaven in the southern part of what was then the Beijing City, to worship Heaven according to the imperial ritual. So he already starts trying to pack or to take the imperial baggage up at that time, at the end of 1914. Then he organizes during 1915 a campaign to have himself made emperor.

So in the last few months before his death in June 1916, this attempt to unify China, that is, by having this network of his guys in all of the posts controlling the various provinces, starts to come apart. It comes apart because his erstwhile protégés

and students will not back him in his move to assume the throne. This is an interesting phenomenon given that these were people who owed everything to him and yet they would not go that far to support a restoration of the monarchy. I think there are two reasons for this. In the long run, we see once more a desire for local autonomy, which is more or less established, again emerging; that is, Yuan Shikai, through this establishment of the monarchy, is going to reconstitute the center again, to tighten controls over the rest of the country. This would not be welcomed by local elites. The second factor is that there had been a sea change in the mentality of these students and protégés, that republicanism indeed was more advanced than monarchism, that the monarchy was a passé institution; it wasn't as modern as the Republic. And so, I think those are the two major factors that kept his erstwhile students from backing him in his bid for the throne.

19.6 The Warlord Phenomenon

With the death of Yuan Shikai in June of 1916, those few threads that were holding the nation of China together simply snap. And after that the government in Beijing does not control much.

It controls essentially Beijing and its immediate environs, not much more. And so in this situation, we usually talk about the rise of warlords, that is, military commanders who also have political power. This is undeniably true, but I see it more as a continuation of the tone set by the 1898 Coup, the people with control over armed violence are going to be the people who make the final decisions on things for these several decades.

19.6.1 *Extreme Variation*

As for warlords themselves, there are of enormous variety, and also of a great variation of scope or size. We usually think of the warlords as people like Feng Yuxiang or Yan Xishan or Wu Peifu, and so on. They were leaders of large armies and large areas of territory. But within those areas of territory, there were other smaller warlords, I suppose you could call them, people who controlled their territory by armed force primarily and in effect governed that territory.

19.6.2 *An Era of Disorder*

What happens with the demise of the examination system, together with the general tenor of the age (which is an age of the military), is that a new kind of local rural elite emerges. The older established families, so-called gentry families, were very

often unable to continue on as important political influences in their locales because this new breed had a different kind of skill, military skill. And in many other cases, you see a similar desertion of the countryside by old well-established gentry families because again beginning with the 1911 Revolution, you have growing insecurity of rural areas. So very often these families would simply pick up and leave. They take what wealth they could take and then move to a larger urban enclave.

At the time, of course, kidnapping was a very big business through the 1920s, and depending upon the area, even into the 1930s and beyond. That is, after having identified wealthy household, a member of that household would be kidnapped, held for ransom. This often ruined some old wealthier families of political influence, old gentry families. And so together with the times favoring a new kind of elite, you have this factor of rural insecurity taking place.

19.6.3 More Complex Situation

So the warlord era is much more complex than it usually is viewed. Among the top warlords, there was quite a variation. You had Wu Peifu, known as the “Scholar General,” because he had a traditional degree. You had Feng Yuxiang, who was first converted to Christianity and then became a fervent Christian, the “Christian General.” You had Zhang Zongchang, the “Dog Meat General.” And most of these militarists were really quite patriotic. Zhang Zuolin was supposed to have been collaborating with the Japanese. Zhang Zuolin controlled the Northeast, and yet in the end, if you look at his actions quite closely, you’ll find that he is resistant to Japanese aggression as well and of course he’s eventually assassinated by the Japanese.

So in a lower scale, you find in my area of Southwest Henan a similar phenomenon. These were highly nationalistic people who express their nationalism first as local self-government form. They were first and foremost going to protect their own autonomy because they saw these provincial governments or peripatetic armies of various militarists as being oppressors. They instituted many many remarkable modern reforms. Bie Tingfang, the semi-literate leader, for instance, he builds the first water power electric generator in the area. He starts issuing pamphlets on how to handle the problems of everyday life of people. Really, for someone who is a mountaineer, has had very little education, he brings in experts from Shanghai and such places to be the technocrats of his little area there. Once more going back to the Henan example. Looking at the provincial records, you have no idea that this group of counties is completely independent. Only occasionally when one of the military governors threatens to invade it with an army, do you start seeing in the written record what was the actual situation on the ground.

19.6.4 Generalizations

In sum, this period, which is the nadir of national fortunes to a certain extent—it is that part of history that is the least unity in the Chinese nation—does have another interesting side and that it is during this period that you have for the first time in a long time a diversification of elites. That is to say, for the most part in imperial period, you have an elite that is based upon some form of the examination system, book learning. With the situation in the twentieth century, you have people who are not necessarily educated in a certain fashion as they were in the examination, the civil service examination days. But rather this was a period in which people of varying talents could rise to the top. Previously, you had something like a funnel, the examination system which is going to produce a particular kind of person would funnel all of the available talent. Everybody wanted to travel the same path. After the examination system is abolished, you have the beginning of a diversification, that all of the talents are not going to be again concentrated in one particular path. But there would be a diversity, development of various other kinds of talents that would enable careers of these people to be successful.

Chapter 20

The May Fourth Movement



20.1 The May Fourth Incident

We are now going to discuss what is usually termed the May Fourth Movement. What exactly happened on May 4th, 1919? Well, it's a relatively easily described incident. On Sunday, May 4th, 1919, after the terms of the Treaty of Versailles, which ended World War I, had reached China, the students of the ten-odd universities around Beijing decided to protest the treaty, protest its acceptance by the government, and so held a rally at the Tian'anmen, which is in the center of Beijing.

They gather certain speakers, student leaders, speak against the treaty and then disperse, except that some of the students decide to bring their protest to a higher level, or intense level and to go after certain ministers in the cabinet at the time who are regarded as "soft" on Japan and who are regarded as at fault for having such a treaty settlement in the first place. So they go to the house of one of the ministers—he isn't home—another one happens to be there so he is beaten up and the house itself is burnt. There were arrests after this action, protests about the arrests. And at this point you have the faculty, some faculty of Beijing University also joining the movement and the demonstrations. Now at this point, the happenings in Beijing evoke a response in other large cities, such as Shanghai, so that there are other similar demonstrations there, and at this point, it's the arrest of the students which is the question; that is, the students have to be let go. There were other demonstrations in which the Beijing faculty was engaged, certain leading members of it specifically. And then after a few weeks, the movement kind of died down.

20.2 Historical Significance

So why is it that we call that entire period the May Fourth Era? It's because that it blurs together with other similar movements at the time, and it's because that the leadership of the May Fourth demonstrations, the following demonstrations, as

well as the general tenor of the demonstrations was very similar to what was called prior to that time the New Culture Movement. We could easily date the New Culture Movement to 1915 with the founding of *New Youth*, which is a convenient way of starting the era. One of the leaders of the May Fourth Movement was indeed the founder of *New Youth*.

It is in the relatively small group of modern-style intellectuals that other related phenomena occur. These are called “New this” or “New that,” sometimes just called “New,” say, “New Tide”; a “Renaissance” was a term that was also applied. In any case, why is the era and the movement significant? Why do we pay attention to it in history? Why do we regard it as another watershed event, a marker of the way that things had changed through time?

20.2.1 The Founding of the CPC

Well, there are basically five reasons. The first is that the founding of the Communist Party of China grows out of the May Fourth Movement. That is, certain of its leaders, two in particular, Chen Duxiu and Li Dazhao, are the founders of the Communist Party of China.

20.2.2 Arrival of Marxism

The second is related to the first. It's the arrival of Marxism, specifically Marxism-Leninism, which is somewhat different. Up until that time, prior to 1918, there had been almost no interest in Marxism or Marxism-Leninism because most of the intellectuals felt that it didn't apply to China. This was about already industrialized countries and the growth of urban proletariat and so on, wouldn't apply to China, which didn't have much of an industrial base itself. However, once the October Revolution occurred in Russia, then the view of what Marxism was, how it could be related to China changed. So prior to that time, the popular socialist type movements were Anarchism, Guild Socialism and Utopian Socialism. Marxist thought was, prior to that time, as I said, ignored. Although the *Communist Manifesto* was translated into Chinese in 1909, it didn't have any impact at that juncture.

20.2.3 Anti-Traditionalism

The third important feature, one of its historically significant features, is that it brought, it emerged with and it gave rise to a certain brand-new kind of intellectual as well as emotional constructs that were anti-traditional. Now this is extremely interesting because in other non-Western countries, and in fact in some Western

countries, the intellectuals always adopt a stance of, although anti-imperialist, a stance of protection of their own culture. It's only in China that you have an attempt to jettison the entire past, rather than protect it. So this is something that makes it quite special indeed.

20.2.4 *New Nationalism*

It also gives birth to a new kind of nationalism, specifically anti-imperialist nationalism that you could call a mass nationalism. At the least, it was urban mass nationalism. That is to say, this kind of nationalism was not very influential still in rural society, but in urban society it became, mass-based. Prior to this time, true nationalists anywhere in China were relatively few and after this time, at least the urban populations seem to be more nationalist than before.

20.2.5 *Emphasis on Youth*

Finally, the May Fourth Movement, the New Culture Movement, brings a hitherto non-existent emphasis upon youth. As we said, the gerontological principles of Chinese culture are already there very early, right in the oracle bones. You could indeed see them in operation and for the following millennia, this general principle held true. Now with the rise of May Fourth, New Culture Movements, you have an emphasis upon youth rather than age, inexperience rather than experience, because this movement was going to create a fundamental change and so someone who didn't have as much experience, someone who wasn't as old would not be as corrupted by the present bad society, and therefore more suited to change it than an older person. The various publications of the time very often had "Youth" or "New" in the title.

20.3 Historical Factors

So why did this phenomenon, this movement occur in the late teens and not before? ... Even at the end of the Qing, urban nationalism was encouraged by the dynasty, the government. However, nothing as strong or as widespread had occurred prior to this time. Up until this time, the attitude of most intellectuals toward foreign or specifically Western countries was not that of opposition, but rather of emulation, in the sense that all the better for the British, we should have a similar strength. So there was no stance of moral reprobation toward foreign imperialism in it. So what had happened between 1900 and 1919? Well, the first thing that happens is that we have larger urban centers growing that are more and more, modernized.

20.3.1 Overseas Study and Returned Students

There are similar institutions to other large cities in the world that are taking shape. And the first, the most important among them is the modern Western-style school with a Western curriculum.

The people who are teaching in these schools very often were returned students, that is, people who had studied abroad. And without the demise of the examination system, which created a vocational crisis among young people, and also created avenues of other kinds of elites to rise through, there would no longer have been any possibility of a movement of this sort, especially because these overseas students were by nature very nationalistic. When living abroad, as I mentioned, one's own nationality is very intensely felt. They had, moreover, lived in societies that were much more affluent and comfortable with, nations that were more powerful than China. And so they had a very concrete image of what China should be like. You know, in many cases, it is that concrete image that they return to China with; that will be the key one. I'm thinking, for instance, of Chiang Kai-shek. Chiang Kai-shek studies in Japan at a military school. And I think forever after, he carries around an image of a truly strong nation capable of mobilization in mostly military terms, that he saw in Japan. And if he had his druthers, he would like to have made over China into a similar state and society. They are returning to China to further these types of causes, causes of nationalism and causes of modernization.

20.3.2 Modern Schools and Students

Who are they teaching in these modern-style schools? They are teaching again a population that did not exist ten, fifteen years before, at least in any great numbers, and that is the modern-style student. Modern-style students were not abroad. They didn't have their consciousness of being Chinese raised by being confronted with foreigners and a foreign society. Rather, they had stronger identification with the nation because the nature of the schools at the time was quite different from that of the traditional-style schools. Traditional-style schools are always locally based. A lineage might run one. It would be specific to a particular area. Modern-style schools, especially the higher levels, had students from various places together day after day. And the only thing in some cases that the students had in common was being Chinese. A middle school would then be a hotbed of nationalism because the only thing that these students shared was the identity of being Chinese.

20.3.3 Psychological Effect of the Republican Revolution

Thirdly, another precondition for the May Fourth Movement is the 1911 Revolution. The 1911 Revolution didn't change all that much but one thing that it did change: it removed the monarchy forever. Now for several millennia, the Chinese emperor or king was a kind of linchpin that held the world together. He was the representative of humanity to the universe. He was the final authorizer of all authority because he derived that from Heaven directly. So we have a universal king with four millennia of history, a pillar between Heaven and Earth, a regulating link between Man and Nature that was removed suddenly and with nothing else to replace to function in the same way. So that meant that the pyramiding, superior-subordinate relationships that were basic as a moral duty, that pyramided to the top of the structure with the emperor being there at the apex were suddenly decapitated, that he no longer had a connection with the Cosmos. It meant then that all fathers were de-authorized; all people in authority to some extent no longer had the authority that they once had because this type of legitimacy would come down directly, through the emperor to the authority figures in the society.

To look at the entire phenomenon in another way, let's imagine these returned students coming back to China after having seen the outside world and reviewing recent Chinese history in their mind: what is the answer? We are in such disarray, in such a mess here. Now in the 1860s, we found that the secret to wealth and power, national strength and affluence was not in military hardware, was not in importation of just military hardware. In the 70s and 80s and onward, we found the secret of success did not lie in the machine, powered factories, in the various other types of modern enterprises, economic enterprises. And so we found later that even creating a new kind of polity, a new kind of state, that is, having a revolution and creating a republican a form of government, didn't do it either. In fact, after the Republican Revolution, it looked as though China was even more disunited, weaker, more humiliated internationally, less capable of keeping the foreigners at bay than before. So we've been changing things through time in a wider and wider scope. As I said, it could be envisioned as a cone through time with the increasing scope of various cultural borrowings. So again at the same time there is the idea of evolution being stymied, being stopped by the Chinese past, by Chinese culture.

So these returned students having reviewed Chinese history in this fashion would then think: well, what is there left to change? We've changed about everything there is. Well, the answer is "Cultural Revolution," that is to say, a final, a basic and a totalistic transformation of the culture which in turn determines consciousness.

To a certain extent, in Chinese culture, especially in the neo-Confucian version, there is a primacy given to consciousness. Remember if consciousness is changed, if you align your consciousness, your soul with the Dao of the Cosmos, then you become almost super human, you have the power to change anything. But it all starts from the consciousness. So there is a kind of primacy that exists for consciousness in Chinese culture and the only way to get at consciousness is to change the cultural surroundings.

20.4 Figures in May Fourth—New Culture

Let's talk about some of the leaders of the movement.

20.4.1 *Chen Duxiu*

Perhaps the single most important one was Chen Duxiu, one of the co-founders of the Communist Party of China. He was in a way the archetypal returned student. He had gone to Japan, had seen the way that Japanese society worked and the power of the Japanese state. He then returned to China and founded a journal *New Youth*, in which in the first issue he issues a clarion call to all of Young China to essentially overthrow all of Old China, and most of all Confucianism. He was calling for a totalistic, unequivocal and uncompromising rejection of the Chinese past, of Chinese culture, its every aspect in a way and ethics, social institutions, music and whatever, to throw it all over for the rationalistic culture of the West. In fact, you could almost hear Voltaire's old war cry, which was "Écrasez L'infame!"—crush the evil thing. Voltaire was referring to the established church in France whereas Chen Duxiu was referring to Confucianism, to the old values of the past. He presented a kind of motto as well as a panacea in a two-word formula, Science and Democracy. To him, this summed up Western culture and was what China had to adopt at all cost.

Now he didn't care about the sensibilities of national pride, nor about cultural pride. He went so far as to use the transliterations of these two words in English rather than the perfectly serviceable words that were already part of the Chinese language. In other words, he wanted to rub people's noses in the foreignness of these things. So Mr. 赛恩斯 and Mr. 德默克拉西 were put forward as the new sages of China. He presented them in a way as a panacea because all problems would be solved if these two things were adopted.

One of the most important aspects of what Chen Duxiu had to say was a message of high value on individualism. That is to say, there was going to be after this a generally positive value placed upon the development, the fulfillment and the choices of the individual person versus that person's duties to identity with a group or society in general. That is to say, we all know what the most important society organization was in China. It was the family. And indeed it is the authority of the family that is going to be one of the targets of the May Fourth Era. Chen Duxiu himself later becomes Marxist and so this message of his changes. But at least in this period, he was very much the philosophe.

20.4.2 *Hu Shi*

Another important pivotal figure in the May Fourth Movement is Hu Shi. He was a disciple of John Dewey and a general champion of American-style Pragmatism. That was his essence, and that was what he continued to hold throughout his life. That aspect of his thought never really changed. At the time of May Fourth Movement, however, he was noted more for his championing of colloquial (白话) literature.

The promotion of 白话 literature and in fact the use of the colloquial language in written form for other purposes could, in my opinion, also be related to the central values of the May Fourth Movement, Science and Democracy. Well, how so? Because the written colloquial language was going to be easier to learn than the classical Chinese. Therefore, it would present the opportunity of education for more people and therefore could be considered a force for Egalitarianism, which in turn is related to the notion of democracy. It was also regarded as a more efficient way, a more rational way, of conveying meaning. It had more flexibility; it had of course the ability to adopt or invent new terms as well. And this could be considered more scientific than classical Chinese. At the time the emphasis of criticism was on the old-style artificiality, the overall prose, etc. that was embodied in classical Chinese language itself.

20.4.3 *Cai Yuanpei*

Another important figure is Cai Yuanpei. He, too, is a returned student and is appointed the head of Beijing University, that is, the premier educational institution in China in 1917. And he himself was not a radical on the culture's question or indeed a radical on any other kinds of questions but he was a Westernized, a Western educated intellectual. On the other hand, he also had a traditional degree. So his background is somewhat different from the others'. Now the thing about Cai Yuanpei, his leadership of Beijing University is that he set out to create an environment of competing ideologies. He set about to create a place where all opinions could be represented and could be heard and competed with one another. Without his presidency of Beijing University, then there is no question that the entire May Fourth Movement, May Fourth Era would have taken somewhat another form.

20.4.4 *Li Dazhao*

One of the co-founders of the Communist Party of China, Li Dazhao, who ends up being a Marxist is Chen Duxiu's partner in the enterprise of Marxism as well as founding the Communist Party of China. But as a person and as a thinker, he is quite different in most respects.

Li was also the person who took Mao Zedong in as an assistant in the library of Beijing University. Li was the chief librarian there. Chairman Mao wasn't exactly his registered student but he did audit a lot of classes. And I think that in this process Li's understanding of Marxism-Leninism had a considerable influence on Chairman Mao's understanding of it. There is a phrase in Chinese, 先入为主, that is, the first impressions are the lasting ones, the dominant ones. And I think in this case, it is fair to use such a phrase.

There are many aspects of Li's thought. We'll concentrate upon two. The first is the strong nationalist component; that is, in Marxism, and even in the Leninist form of Marxism, there was a great stress on internationalism, that is, the brotherhood of all workers of the world against the capitalist classes of the world. However, in Li's case, he stresses that all of China is one great big proletarian entity that it is internationally a proletarian nation, I suppose you could say. He focuses on this idea rather than a struggle within the classes of China. Other things that attracted him to Marxism-Leninism were the Leninist aspects; that is, a core of professional revolutionaries were going to make the revolution happen. It wasn't going to wait upon the inevitable unfolding of society's development to create a revolution. It was going to be pushed by will power and by this core of professional revolutionaries.

And that brings us to the second feature of his thought that certainly influence Chairman Mao. And that is "Volunteerism," philosophical Volunteerism, which holds that it's the human will that can be substitute for socioeconomic conditions; that is, the human will itself, determination, can change the social economic realities out there. So China was not qualified, in terms of economic and social development, for a revolution at this time, but human consciousness could make it so. So there's a tendency here to kind of turning the original Marxist premise of social existence determining consciousness around to make consciousness being able to determine social existence. So this is essentially an indication of why Chairman Mao's version would have a similar stress on the importance of human will, so much so that it becomes the primary site of struggle.

A third element is Populism. That is, Li Dazhao was devoted to the Narodnik-style of Populism that was current at the end of the Czarist era in Russia and this meant that he would have an interest in linking up with the rural China. And he does indeed author an essay that urges young urban intellectuals to go to the countryside, spread the nationalist message and raise nationalist consciousness, and so this element, which would play an enormously important role in Chairman Mao's thought, is already present in Li Dazhao's.

This movement, especially the anti-traditionalistic component, does provoke to a certain extent what might be considered a conservative reaction. One of these could be the essays by Liang Qichao that he writes upon return from Europe. That could be considered in a way a response that Chinese culture still has great value, that Western culture does have these enormous flaws. The essence of another protest of sorts against general scientification, Westernization is made by Zhang Junmai. He gives a series of lectures about the view of life, way of life. The message that he conveys is that science doesn't have all answers—it can't make life meaningful; it can't alone solve the problems of human life; and in reality it has limitations.

This leads eventually to a kind of war or debate, a public debate, which is usually termed the Metaphysics and Science debate. And it is in this debate that it is clear that something has happened in the cultural venue and the consciousness of Chinese intellectuals that made science the supreme, the ultimate criteria of value in general.

20.4.5 *Liang Shuming*

Another person quite important in Chinese history in general who could be considered also giving a reaction to the demands of the more radical members of the May Fourth generation was Liang Shuming. Now he also delivered a series of lectures that were published in book form in 1921 called *Eastern and Western Cultures and Their Philosophies*. In general, I've always regarded Liang as a kind of a Chinese Gandhi, that is, a Confucian/Buddhist holy man, a person quite attuned to the spiritual life, to a certain extent, the way that Gandhi was, but Gandhi becomes a national leader in an anti-colonial movement in India whereas Liang does certainly not do so.

The theme of this book is the dehumanizing/ugly aspects of modernization, of modern Western life. However, he predicts that history has reached a kind of tipping point that the next world culture is going to be a form of Chinese culture, of Confucian culture essentially. Western culture was needed for satisfying of primal needs of humanity; that is, it went forward, bent nature to its will and provided for the material wants of human beings. But having reached that stage of most material wants being solved or satisfied, the population of the world, who had followed this path, namely the West, would see that they don't enjoy life very much. Modernization might have brought wealth and power but it hadn't brought a true satisfying human life.

And so he applies this to a kind of grand evolutionary scheme, whereby the next path of world culture will be more or less the Confucian path. Now that leaves China in an awkward position. On the one hand, it cannot but adopt science and democracy to tread the Western path, so it too can solve the primal wants, the material necessities of human life. And yet by doing that, it cannot jettison the values that it already has. Liang accounts for the failure of Chinese civilization to realize itself, to realize these high ideals that it had, because the sages of China were more prescient, they could see that eventually humanity would have these problems that Chinese culture solves. But that meant that China was caught in the middle. It was in a kind of limbo. It couldn't realize these ideals completely because it didn't have the material base and yet it would be unwise to simply destroy the precious gift of the sages, which Liang describes as basically "what makes humans human."

Now eventually of course, he thinks that even given everyone living a happy life, a happy, satisfying and emotionally satisfying life, solving the problems of human relations, there is still ultimately the problem of the transitory nature of life and inevitable death. So in the long run, after the world has solved the problems of material scarcity and is living a satisfying life with harmonious relationships between people, eventually it will go Buddhist, that is, it will take the Indian path, or at least what Liang described as the Indian path; that's the third and ultimate path, as he

himself was a Buddhist, and although he shifted his emphasis, he later told me, from Buddhism to Confucianism, that is, he felt that at the time of the 1920s, China didn't need Buddhism, it needed science and democracy and Confucianism.

So he was talking about having the benefits of modernization while avoiding the nasty parts of it. He hoped to build a kind of new civilization that would have the benefits of both, of modernization as well as retaining the humanity that was at the heart of Chinese culture. When this book was written of course, he didn't have an answer as to how to do this actually. In the latter part of the 1920s, he does. He calls this way of creating a new civilization "rural reconstruction" and he's going to start in China by a Confucian revival in the countryside, by changing governmental forms, the way that the government relates to the people, by reviving certain ideas of, say, the Taizhou school (the Wang Yangming offshoot) and at the same time importing science and democracy, most especially the technologies that would be important in economic terms and for rural society. So that is his answer, his final answer. But because of circumstances, his attempts to create this do not play out.

20.5 Issues in the May Fourth Era

20.5.1 The Cultures Controversy

He is related, however, to at the time what was called the "cultures controversy," that is, what kind of culture should we have in future, what is the difference between Chinese culture and Western culture, and what should Chinese intellectuals do about the culture question? Should they advocate wholesale Westernization? Should they have selective Westernization? Should they advocate blending of cultures, the best from West and East? And how through this does one maintain a cultural identity? How through this does one maintain being Chinese? Now this general question will occupy the Chinese intellectuals in one form or another for the rest of the twentieth century and to the present in many respects. Every time there is an opportunity, it will be raised again and be the subject of a public discussion. In the 1980s, after the reforms had started for instance, you have again a "cultural fever," in which everyone wanted to discuss the question of culture. And so even today, it remains a pertinent/significant question.

20.5.2 Split Between Liberals and Marxists

The next important development in the May Fourth Movement is the split between the Liberals like Hu Shi and the Marxists like Li Dazhao. Why was Marxism attractive to Chinese intellectuals at that time? I think one of the basic reasons is that Marxism in its Leninist form had actually succeeded in Russia in creating a real revolution,

that is, undeniable revolution; it can be done. Secondly, because Russia was of the European nations one of the more backward ones, one of the less industrialized one. That's not completely true. Because in a decade or two before World War II, Russia did indeed start to industrialize. But in general, Russia was still comparatively backward in economic and industrial development. So if it can occur, if we can have a revolution in Russia, then maybe this ideology is relevant to us in China.

It's also attractive to intellectuals. It gives them this great goal, that is, the overall salvation of humanity. And in its Leninist forms, it provides a glorious role for intellectuals. Remember at this time, there was still a kind of vocational crisis among young Chinese intellectuals. Really after the abolition of the examination system, there was no immediate path that presented itself on which to proceed. So in this case, we have a role of the intellectual as professional revolutionary, which not only is glorious because it's going to redeem humanity, it's also going to lead to an elite that is going to be made up of intellectuals who are going to go organize the workers and so create the revolution. This is a very good way to go vocationally. The intellectual could then maintain his elite's status and emerge as an elite in a state-of-the-art, the newest and up-to-date version of state and society. Finally, another element was that Russia twice offered to give up the privileges that the Czarist Russia had in China, give up those special privileges that had been gained through imperialist means.

This split between Liberals and Marxists was actually expressed quite openly in a kind of public discussion, I suppose you could call it debate, between Hu Shi representing the Liberal side and Li Dazhao who had by that time become very interested in Marxism. So there was this debate about the value of isms versus simply focusing upon the solution to problems. Hu Shi, being an advocate of Pragmatism, advocated putting aside any ideological concerns, any talk of ideals and isms of that sort and just approaching each single problem in a very pragmatic manner, looking for ways to solve it without any consideration at all given to the ideological aspect of the solutions. Li Dazhao answers essentially in this way: yes, that's true, you have to solve problems and all of that, but having an ideal, a vision for the future that would be embodied in an ism has a practical effect too, because having a vision has an effect on the masses of people, they see something that they could put their efforts toward. You have to get emotionally stirred up to take action, he implies. And therefore, a cool analysis of concrete problems which Hu Shi advocated doesn't do that. You must have an ideal, something to which all can aspire to in common.

20.5.3 Founding of the CPC

As I said, it's Li Dazhao and Chen Duxiu who found the Communist Party of China but they don't do it in the same place. Chen Duxiu was jailed for his part in the demonstrations, the May Fourth demonstrations, and when he was released in the September of 1919, he simply resigned his university position and moved to Shanghai. He becomes increasingly absorbed in Marxism. He now drops the Science and Democracy formula and terms democracy a tool that the bourgeoisie use "to

swindle humankind in order to maintain power.” So he is through with democracy. He develops in certain ways a different version of Marxism in Shanghai from that of Li Dazhao’s. Li Dazhao was more Chinese nativist in his thinking. In his actions, at least according to Mr. Liang Shuming, he was a much milder personality, easier to get along with. Chen Duxiu, apparently, was quite rude a personality, he was extremely intelligent and it was this intelligence that enabled him to be so rude, so cutting in his remarks, in any kind of social intercourse.

In any case, Li Dazhao’s group is still in Beijing and very soon develops a similar society, Marxist Research Study Group. By March of 1920—this happens very fast after the May Fourth demonstrations—he has assembled various types of groups in the area into one, that is, there were at the time, innumerable kinds of the anarchists of various sorts for instance, whatever other groups of that sort who were interested in socialism in some way. They are now assembled into one Beijing society for the study of Marxist theory.

Now at the same time, the Comintern agent Grigorii Voitinsky arrives. He first confers with Li in Beijing, then goes south to confer with Chen. And so it came about that in July of 1921, the founding meeting of the Communist Party of China was held in a girls’ boarding school in the French concessionary area. There were twelve delegates representing fifty members. Neither Chen nor Li actually attended this meeting. Mao Zedong did. It is the party that is the important cultural innovation, the party structure itself that is unprecedented in Chinese history.

20.6 New Urban Culture

20.6.1 *Life Style and Social Values*

A significant sociological development during this period is the emergence in large urban enclaves only of a new, kind of “cool” life style that was emulated by some of the affluent urban young, that is, anything Western, acquaintance with Western food or literature became something very with-it, very desirable. There were other changes. Women started cutting their hair, short, bobbed hair that was the fashion at the same time in Europe and North America.

20.6.2 *Easier Sexual Ways*

There were easier sexual ways, I suppose you could say; espousals of enumerable isms that were discussed in these circles. There was a focus on fulfillment of the individual. Sometimes, this was termed Ibsenism because the playwright’s focus was indeed on the liberation of the individual from the bonds of family and social convention. In some of his plays, the person who gets liberated is a woman, who

gets liberated from the family that she was in. And in some other cases, it's a male who goes against social convention who is committed to a certain truth that he holds to no matter what the rest of society says. And this kind of thing more or less set the tone for this newly emerging and quite Westernized segment of society. Together with it, there was a kind of semi-Bohemian culture or sub-culture that was growing up at the same time. And "salons" of sorts were held and all of these had absolutely no precedence in the Chinese past.

20.6.3 Rise of Public Press

Another phenomenon during this period is the multiplication of periodicals, little magazines, sometimes not very long lived but publications of one sort or the other very often having to do with something foreign, a foreign "ism." In fact, something foreign might be put into an ism even though there is no such thing in the West. They are conveying information about the various Western things and in most cases, they are put in terms of this or that ism. So it's not only Pragmatism, there's Bergsonism, Bolshevism, Feminism and also Byronism. And my favorite is "Cup-of-Waterism." Some of these periodicals were devoted to a single foreign figure, thinker usually, so that there was a *Bertrand Russell Quarterly* that was published. Others were again devoted to a single issue, such as feminist issues, and there was a multiplicity during this period that soon petered out. The number of little magazines did not maintain itself for the entire period of the 1920s. But the tone of urban life had changed.

Even though most people in urban enclaves lived quite traditional life styles, there was now a segment of the urban population usually younger that adopted a very different life style. There was a considerable communication between these large urban centers of the world. And fashions that would be started in one place would be quickly picked up in the other. New entities such as movie stars emerged, and other similar unprecedented phenomenon.

20.7 Conservative Response

This multiplicity, diversity of isms in the larger urban enclaves meant that the image of the West as a culture, which was seen just 20 years before as a kind of monolithic entity, is now fragmented, that there are many Wests out there. The chief division is with the Marxist West and the non-Marxist West. But in other respects, too, there is no longer one entity that people could refer to as the West. It had become quite diverse. Noted Western intellectuals such as John Dewey or Bertrand Russell did indeed visit China during this time. The Chinese cities were joining the world to some extent, and so the communication of anything from fashion to entertainment was very often common already between Eastern, Chinese and Western cities. Shanghai is the most this way. And it is in Shanghai that you find the newest of forms, the most Bohemian

of sub-cultures and so on. It means that Chinese cities are developing further through this period. And by the 1930s, they are in some cases, in the case of Shanghai, and maybe Canton, integrated into the world, into the larger world, culturally as well as in other respects.

Chapter 21

The New Literature



21.1 Why New?

We are going to say a few words about the literary component of the May Fourth Movement. The New Literature, as it was called, was initiated in the late teens by the first practitioner of it, Lu Xun. The Colloquial Language Revolution itself was extremely successful and succeeded very rapidly, so that the medium of literature as well as ordinary communication in other forms of prose by the late 1920s and early 1930s were written colloquial language. So that aspect went very rapidly. The purely literary, that is, fiction, creative writing and poetry, went equally as rapidly. Well, poetry did not, that is, colloquial poetry didn't have the same success as creative writing, fiction.

21.1.1 *Medium*

What is new about the New Literature? Two things: one, the medium; two, the message. Well, what's the medium? The medium, of course, is first of all the written colloquial language. Of course, like any written language, there were great differences between what people actually spoke and the written language form of it. Nevertheless, it was closer to speech than literary Chinese by far. That was one of the major characteristics of the medium. But there's another, that is, creative writing and works of fiction were now in essentially Western-style forms. That is, the traditional Chinese novel, for instance, did not have an overall plot. It was episodic. There was no direct equivalent of the Western-style stories; that is, the types of fiction that were practiced previous to the Colloquial Language Revolution of the May Fourth Era were still quite different from those forms that came later, which were very often modeled on foreign or specifically Western literary forms. This is true across the board of all writers.

I should note, however, that the poetry seemed to be quite different. Poetry often was written in the old literary forms and experiments in colloquial poetry sometimes failed miserably.

21.1.2 *Message*

The second difference, the second new feature of this literature, is that it had a new content. I had mentioned previously, Hu Shih, Chen Duxiu and the others attacked the old literature as formalistic, unnatural, out dated and stilted and so called for a new “natural” literature that stressed content rather than form, rather than style. They both, Hu Shi and Chen Duxiu, wanted to use this literature to reform society, as a tool of social protest and of reform. So as I said, Lu Xun was the first successful practitioner.

21.2 Literary Scene in the 1920s and 1930s

Before we discuss him and some of his works however, we’d like to set the scene. By the 1920s, there was a new kind of literary person on the scene. There were cliques and schools that formed. Again only within the big city enclaves, very few were outside there. Even those who had come from outside soon joined a group or another. I think of Shen Congwen. Shen Congwen was from a heavily isolated area in western Hunan but he went to Beijing and became a member of one of the literary groups there. Overall, from the early 1920s to the late 1920s and early 1930s, there is a general shift in the literary world, from various types of literary thought to more Marxist positions. There is a general shift leftward during the period as a whole, and therefore an increasing gravitation of writers into the Communist camp.

21.3 Lu Xun

Lu Xun is usually regarded as the greatest practitioner of colloquial language literature of fiction and those works of his that were the most successful were indeed short stories. He never wrote anything really long. *The True Story of Ah Q* for instance is still at most a novella, and the same is true of *Diary of a Madman*. It is this form, the short story, that was most fitted to Lu Xun’s personal attitude and his personal gifts. That is to say, the short story stresses the episodic rather than overall long-term plot stories. For instance, *The True Story of Ah Q* was originally published as a serial, that is, episode by episode. And in the end, I suppose Lu Xun got tired of him and so had him killed off, thus ending the serialization that had first appeared in newspapers.

What about the man Lu Xun? Well, he is regarded in China today as the literary patron saint of the revolution. This was primarily because of what Mao Zedong wrote of him after his death, calling him the greatest hero fighting on “the cultural front” and greatest revolutionary hero and so on. So this more or less ensured him the position that he now holds.

His brother Zhou Zuoren was also a writer of a different style. Zhou Zuoren was more appreciative of traditional culture and its ways, unlike his brother.

21.3.1 *Life*

Lu Xun's original name (Lu Xun is a pen name) was Zhou Shuren. So he was surnamed Zhou. It's just that his pen name became far better known than his original name. Early in his life, he grew up not in a big city; that is, it wasn't all that rural but Shaoxing is not exactly a big urban center either. He went to Japan to study very early, originally to study medicine. All of this is in the Preface to the group of short stories, *Battle Cry*. Now he goes to Japan to study medicine. At one point, from what he had said, he was inspired by the view of Chinese in the Northeast during the Russo-Japanese War not having any particular national feeling or pride. There was a slide shown in class of a group of Chinese watching the execution of another Chinese by the Japanese and there was no sign of outrage on the Chinese faces. This apparently caused Lu Xun to reevaluate his career path. He decided that it was more important to be a “doctor of souls” than a doctor of corporal bodies, I guess. After that, he returned to China, but did not really take up literature. He had to be persuaded. He was very interested in antiquities and such, as well as traditional Chinese literature.

By 1912, he goes to Beijing; he's not an established writer. He is persuaded by members of the May Fourth group, I suppose you could say, to actually start writing fiction. His first work *Diary of a Madman* is published in 1918 and this more or less “makes his name” forever. His other best works followed immediately after that. After the late 1920s and early 1930s, much of his writing had to do with either translations or polemics within the various literary camps, groupings.

One exception to that is a group of poem-like pieces of prose, prose poetry, called *Wild Grass*. In those poems, if you want to call them that, he expresses some very profound ambivalence about his attitude toward traditional Chinese culture and society. Aside from that, though, he was staunchly and completely negative about the Chinese past.

21.3.2 *Thought*

The two most profound influences on Lu Xun's thought in his early life were Darwinism (that is to say, evolution) and the German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche. Through both of these influences, he tended to be guided by them in his writings. The influences are clearly visible in most of his writings.

21.3.2.1 Nietzsche

From Nietzsche, he took the general notion of the lone romantic hero, not quite the superman perhaps, but something of a person apart from the herd, who sees further, disregards the rules and conventions of the herd, who has more foresight and can see what others, "common" people, cannot see.

21.3.2.2 Darwinism

The second influence, evolutionism or Darwinism, is very clear as well, because sometimes, in fact in his first writing, you have this image of people feeding off of other people, of extreme exploitation in essence, a view of society itself as a great free-for-all in which the fittest only survive. It's the one feeding on the other.

His first work, as I said, *Diary of a Madman*, reflects both of these influences. First, the madman is someone who sees what other people don't see. He can see beyond; he can see the world differently from everyone else in society. He is a lone romantic hero. And secondly, what does he see? He sees "EAT PEOPLE" as the real message of systems of morality so that he looks at the usual moralizing, moralistic texts of Confucianism and can see between the lines the instruction or the admonition "EAT PEOPLE". So this is a direct reflection of the Darwinian influence on him. In the same way, in his collection of *Battle Cry*, a collection of short stories, there are many many other examples of precisely this.

21.3.2.3 Pessimism

Overall, in all of his writings, he has a very pessimistic attitude toward, well, everything. He might have involved himself with some positive statements, such as the "Manifesto of the Left-wing Writers." But that was not, one suspects, his own. Obviously what he did do was a translation; he didn't write it himself. In the writings that he himself did, you don't see too much positive. In fact, I can't see any at all. The usual point that people make is: well, you have to remember at the end of *Diary of a Madman*, he did make the statement or put in the admonition "Save the Children."

That is somewhat pessimistic in itself. It can't be called a positive program for action. It might indeed be interpreted somewhat negatively because after all, why did

the children need to be saved? Is life that frightening? Is society so evil that we have to worry about saving the children, who everyone wants to protect naturally? This cannot be taken as a positive program. Everything else that appears in his writings is negative and pessimistic. He doesn't seem to like or favor anything.

He doesn't like the "foreign gentleman," an imitation of someone who is completely Westernized or who is an advocate of Westernization, who fits into the fad of these Western manners and dress and so on. He doesn't like them. But he doesn't like the traditional social norms and the traditional personalities that emerge in Chinese society either. He satirizes everything. As a continuation of exposé literature, satirical literature that perhaps has its origins or has its first good example in *The Scholars*, a book that I have mentioned before, because that in itself is an exposé-type literature, a satirical work, very satirical of almost everything but especially the examination system.

At the end of the Qing, the last few years of the Qing Dynasty, you have the emergence of similar satirical works, "exposé literature," that again satirize everything. The colloquial novels that appear in the first decade of the twentieth century and in the last decade of the nineteenth are very often of this genre. So Lu Xun's adaptation of a satirical genre of literature can be seen to some degree as not completely unprecedented. It might be seen as a continuation of a line, a continuation of a tradition of sorts.

21.3.3 *Significant Works*

21.3.3.1 *The True Story of Ah Q*

Let's discuss *The True Story of Ah Q*. That is his single most famous work. Yet like everything else of his fiction that he wrote it's short story form. The short story form is the perfect tool for satirization. It focuses on a depiction of characters but no character development. Let's say, in the case of Ah Q, he ends up the same character as he was at the very beginning at the end of the story. There is no over-arching plotline in which things change; it's rather again more episodic and this might have something to do with the way it was originally written and published as episodes, published in a serial in the newspaper. This might be considered a defect, but in the end maybe not so. The story itself was an immediate success and many people immediately saw Ah Q as the embodiment of the "national disease." Even today, you can still hear the expression in China of "Ah Q Thought," referring to a certain pattern of behavior and a way of looking at things that was embodied in the character Ah Q.

21.3.3.2 Preface to the Collection *Battle Cry*

His collection of short stories entitled *Battle Cry* begins an autobiographical preface, whereby he describes his spiritual journey—going to Japan to study medicine and then ending up as a writer of fiction. Even within this preface, you can see very clearly the general pessimism of him.

There is an iron room. That is, breaking out of this room is impossible. There is no possibility of destroying these iron walls, and because they are airtight, eventually the large number of people sleeping within (that is, a “common herd”) are going to suffocate and die. They are sleeping at present. Now in this iron room, where there is no hope, there is one person who is awake. That is the lone romantic hero, the Nietzschean hero who sees what other people don’t. The rest of society is sleeping away to its doom and we have the one person awake like the madman, a personality different from the rest, who sees what others do not. So he sees the situation and the question for him, which he is making a direct parallel to whether or not to go into fiction, write fiction, to do what his original aim was—to become a doctor of souls. And in the end he decides to do so, to wake them up, even though that means that there would still be more suffering than if they were allowed to die in their sleep. So even within this autobiographical preface, you can see these two qualities of negativism/pessimism and lone romantic hero/Nietzschean romantic hero phenomenon.

21.3.3.3 “Medicine”

In the short stories themselves, you see exactly the same features. The one that seems to relate most directly to the preface is the short story “Medicine.” In the short story “Medicine,” you have two families and very significantly, one’s surname is Hua and the other’s surname is Xia, which is the name for China, Huaxia. Now one family has a very sick boy; the other family has a revolutionary who is executed. The family with a very sick boy takes most of its money that it has and invests it in what could be considered a “traditional medicine”, that is, the fresh blood of the slain young man. And so here again you see this “red in tooth and claw” vision of nature—people feeding on one another. It’s a Darwinian image. After the sick boy dies, then both families are bereft of their sons.

And this is another feature of Lu Xun. He has great compassion for individual suffering in concrete situations despite his tendency to satirize absolutely everything. He does have an unmistakable, deep compassion for the suffering of individuals. So in this case, the story ends with the two mothers of the two families not exactly meeting, but showing up in the graveyard together—the one mother desperate about the loss of her son, asking, “If you are still there, then make that crow fly to the top of your grave.” So of course the crow doesn’t fly. But then after a while, it does. So some people have interpreted the crow eventually flying as some kind of a positive sign but in the end the message is clear: society itself is people eating people; dog

eating dog, a very Darwinian image, and that no matter what measures you take, Huaxia (China) is doomed for the most part, you could say, because both families had the loss of a son.

21.3.3.4 “Divorce”

He satirizes other aspects of society too of course. One thinks of the short story “Divorce” in which a young woman is being divorced, is estranged from her husband, and so she goes to a local influential person to be reinstated as his wife. Now the irony here, the point of satire, is that she loathes her husband (whom she terms the “young beast”) and she dislikes the entire family. Yet for matters of face, she wants to be reinstated. Of course, other aspects are satirized as well. The local big shot is shown as diligently sniffing a Han Dynasty jade anus stuffer. And he is shown to be basically a phony. But in the end, it is the question of face that Lu Xun is satirizing, that even though she loathes her husband, she wants to be reinstated as his wife. This, too, does not indicate any positive program with which to solve these problems.

21.3.4 Attitude Toward Social Classes

Lu Xun does not in general have any compassion for particular classes, for particular categories, abstract categories of the sort that, say, Chen Duxiu would want to speak of. He does not sympathize with, for instance, Ah Q would be a good example. As we were saying when describing the social status hierarchy, Ah Q is at the bottom of every one of those categories that we discussed, the five categories; he is a landless day laborer. But being a landless day laborer does not evoke any sympathy from Lu Xun. Rather, Lu Xun has sympathy with the people like the families of the two slain young men; that is, he can sympathize very very profoundly with individuals in concrete situations but does not sympathize with a whole category of individuals across the board.

21.4 Literary Currents in the 1920s and 1930s

The literary scene in the 1920s was characterized as being divided between two different general attitudes toward literature.

21.4.1 *The Literary Society*

The first literary society to be founded in 1921 was called the Literary Society. It included as its members Hu Shi, Lu Xun, Zhou Zuoren and others, and had certain parallels to pre-revolutionary Russian literature. But it wasn't strictly political. It was, to a certain extent, in line with the traditional Confucian emphasis on reform, on changing society through writing—in this case, through creative writing, through literature.

21.4.2 *Creation Society*

The other basic attitude was embodied again by a society, a literary society founded in 1921, called the Creation Society. This group was interested more in the art-for-art's-sake approach. It could be characterized as being Romantic. And in a way, it's typified by one of its members, Guo Moruo. Guo Moruo starts out as an esthete, as someone who is interested in art for art's sake. By 1926, he is already in the Marxist camp. I say "typified" because that's what happened over those several years to most literary people. There was a general shift of everyone in a leftist direction.

21.5 Kuomintang "White Terror" and the Literary World

Later, in the 1930s, the Kuomintang government in Nanjing didn't control that much, but certain things they did control, namely, the larger cities. Of course, they didn't control Canton, or Beijing (or "Beiping"), but it did control Shanghai and Nanjing. And so it is in those areas that people talk about a "White Terror," that the literary community was subject to this constant pressure from the government. It was as though this pressure from the government causes an even deeper bifurcation between the leftist Marxists and everybody else. Lu Xun wasn't ever arrested or anything, because he was able to escape, that as many other dissidents did, by living in a foreign controlled area, a concessionary area. Many of his students, though, did suffer and that's what made him, I think, so angry at the Nanjing Government or other governments, because he cared for his students very much. So the early 1930s saw a deepening of the basic bifurcation between the Left and the Right in the literary scene. And the general movement was from various positions, such as art-for-art's sake, toward social reform and revolution, eventually leftist, Marxist-inspired revolution.

Chapter 22

The Political Scene in 1923–1927



22.1 General Picture

We are now going to depart the intellectual literary aspects of this period, and go back to reviewing the overall political scene. This, as I have said repeatedly, is still the age of the military; that is, the people who control the guns are going to have a controlling position in all political areas. We started off talking about the Coup of 1898, which wouldn't have happened had it not been for certain generals in the Beijing area who actually did it. After that, after the Republic, we have Yuan Shikai, who at the end of the Qing was again the military man, the builder of the new-style armies, emerging and attempting to be a monarch, but failing. We have then all of China being controlled by various regional militarists.

So what's going to happen next at the end of the 1920s and 1930s is that another military man is going to emerge into a preeminent position nationally and that would be Chiang Kai-shek.

Let's find out what's been happening to Sun Yat-sen after the Second Revolution of 1913 did not work. He was around various places, but there was obviously no momentum to his movement, his political party. He had an idea that basically his party was protecting the original constitution of the Republic of China, so therefore it was the legitimate government of all of China. It had its legitimacy but it didn't have actual control, so his vision was to conquer China, take it away from regional militarists by force, who were already in place. All we need now is to take care of the minor detail of actual control over territory.

By 1920, he finds himself what could be considered civilian window dressing of a militarist's regime in Canton, and not much beyond the immediate environs, the general area of Canton. At that point, he has a title of president but he doesn't have that much actual influence or political clout. So he had in this position decided that he's going to eventually launch a "Northern Expedition," reunite China through military means, but he needs aid. He needs backing in order to accomplish that task. He casts about the place approaching various nations, but they don't seem to have much interest. In the meantime, he is establishing himself better and better in Canton

so that he actually does control the area. He doesn't do that without the aid of what turns out to be eventually his right-hand military guy, who is Chiang Kai-shek. He is trained in a military academy in Japan and so is a professional military person.

22.2 KMT Reorganization

22.2.1 *Canton Alliance*

So in 1922, Sun eventually, at the end of the year, attracted the attention of the Soviet Union. That is, the Soviet Union had, immediately after the Bolshevik Revolution, been going around the world trying to foment anti-colonial movements in order to expel imperialist powers from their colonies. The rationale is essentially this: that the theory of imperialism put forth by Lenin (and actually derived in a great degree from Hobson) is that when capitalism matures, you have essentially built this large industrial machine. In one end, you are stuffing in raw materials; at the other end, emerging, coming out, being produced by the machine, are finished industrial products. Now the problem is that you have to run around the world finding raw materials to stuff in one end of the machine and then after the finished products come out, you have to run around the world looking for markets to sell these finished products. It's like the classic cartoon *Fantasia* with Mickey Mouse being the sorcerer's apprentice—he has discovered how to make brooms help him carry water, but then no matter what he does, the brooms keep on multiplying and there's too much water. He is rushing around the place trying to keep up with this demon that he has created. And so in the same way, capitalism is in the same fix. It naturally has to develop into imperialism so that it can secure raw materials and markets.

This was partially to explain why in the industrial world, there was no uprising that should have taken place by the proletarians. Why didn't they perform their historical duty and rebel? Because they were being "bought off," as it were, by the "super profits" that were reaped through colonialism. They would be given more of a share because these larger profits would be dependent upon the colonies of the metropolitan country. So in that way, by cutting off the colonies, by expelling the colonialists around the world, you would eventually cut off these super profits and thus the proletarians back home would be immiserated and eventually perform their historic task. You see that it's still connected with the conventional Marxist notion of an uprising of proletarians. So around the world, in these colonies, Moscow and the Comintern were encouraging and backing various bourgeois democratic movements which were anti-colonial.

Now they settle on Sun Yat-sen primarily because he has better name recognition. They looked at several people. Wu Peifu, the scholar-general, was looked at very closely. There was some inspection of him. Feng Yuxiang, the Christian general, was also looked at very carefully. He in fact later went to Moscow. In the end, they settled on Sun Yat-sen. And so the deal was that the Comintern in Moscow will

reorganize Sun's party and will provide the military wherewithal to launch a northern expedition and reunite China through military means. They will train the army, they will give aid so as to support it and they will arm the army. So this is going to be the Soviet operation primarily. The agreement that Sun Yat-sen signs with the Comintern is openly proclaimed in a manifesto in January of 1923, so this re-outfitting of the Canton regime of Sun Yat-sen's really stems from this agreement and starts in 1923.

22.2.2 *Leninist-Style Party*

The truly most significant change or innovation that takes place at this time is the introduction of the Leninist-style party. Of course, the Chinese Communists already had their Leninist-style party organized in 1921. The kind of party that the Communists had was now going to be kind of transferred to the Nationalist Party.

22.2.2.1 Primary Loyalty to Party

What are the characteristics of the Leninist-style party? The first thing and perhaps the most important thing is that it demands complete and utter loyalty. It demands that a member of this party devote his or her entire life to it. It's an ironclad party with a vertical command structure that doesn't allow for any divergence of the lines of command.

22.2.2.2 Strongly Hierarchical

It's hierarchical. It pyramids to the top, to the central committee, and at the bottom, it has a cell-like structures. The memberships of these cells are secret. That is, the other people in society do not know that they are cell members of this kind of party usually. Now this is perhaps the most important thing—that prior to this time, there was no organization in China that was not in some way mediated by the intervening structures of family or locale, i.e., the usual bonds of morality between individuals, *wulun*, the various relationships between people. In the case of the Leninist-style party, of course, none of that applies. That is, there is a primary loyalty to this organization and every other ethical relationship is secondary to it.

22.2.2.3 Party Army

Another aspect of this party is that it has a military component; that is, it has its own army. And this makes perfect sense because the party itself is designed to seize power and it's going to do that primarily through military means. So that's why the party army is so central to the role of the Leninist party. This aspect is actually

precedented. It's to a certain extent traditional; that is, the Manchus established their own dynasty through military means; every dynasty did. And it was only when the Manchu military might, the military machine of the Manchus, was weakening that there were challenges to its control. So that aspect could be considered traditional.

22.2.2.4 Tradition of the Party: Civil over Military

Another traditional element is, in the Manchu case or in other cases, military commanders were always subordinate to civilian officials. In the case of a Leninist party, the army commanders would be subordinate to political commissars. So in that case, it's still the same relationship that the civil is going to control the military.

22.2.2.5 Party and Government

Another aspect of the Leninist-style party is that the government, whatever government there is, is also subordinate; that is, there is an overlapping structure in leadership between party leadership and government leadership. It's somewhat the same.

22.3 CPC's Development

22.3.1 Organizing Strikes in Cities

So what about the CPC during this era? They have already established a Leninist-style party, and they were doing what communist parties around the world were doing: organizing industrial strikes. And indeed in 1922 and 1923, they had several successful strikes. So if they will follow the orthodox path of organizing urban labor and such, then what is the rationale for them to now join with the Nationalist Party? Well, first of all, China was perceived, at least back in Moscow, as being at the stage of a bourgeois democratic revolution. So the question was: what role would the CPC play in this bourgeois democratic revolution? There's one event in 1923 that I think sets the CPC leadership to thinking in a more, what you might call, rightist direction. That is the railway strike in Henan. In Zhengzhou in 1923, the local controlling militarist Wu Peifu simply shoots down the militant workers and the organizers. So this to a certain extent must have made the Party reflect: Well, trade unionism, organization of urban labor, might work in other environments, such as Britain, where there are established rules of the game. But maybe it won't work here in China at this stage because again it's the people who control violence who call the shots, and we as union organizers can't operate very well in that kind of environment.

22.3.2 *The First CPC-KMT United Front*

At this point, the Communist Party of China then is instructed to join the Nationalist Party. This was the first Nationalist-Communist Alliance and that is indeed what they do. However, they are also instructed to maintain their original structure, a communist party structure within the Nationalist Party as a whole. In other words, they are supposed to be the same party but only as a block within the larger Nationalist Party. To a certain extent, this joining the Nationalist Party really made the CPC. Up until that time, it had very little influence, political influence and very little might or clout. Once they joined this larger party that had many more adherents across the land, then they started to become politically significant. And in 1925, the May 30th Incident enabled the party to expand very rapidly because they tapped into the anti-imperialist sentiments of the urban young, the urban middle class, very often. Now it is not as though the Nationalist Party as a whole was not anti-imperialist, that is one of the tasks of the Northern Expedition to expel the militarists as well as the imperialists. But the CPC was able to benefit more directly from the May 30th Movement itself, more so than the Nationalist Party as a whole. So joining the Nationalist Party at this point was in retrospective a very wise move. The party leadership was still supposed to be limiting its organizational activities to urban labor, to labor union organizing. Sun Yat-sen himself was cognizant of the potential of labor organization, saw it as a great plus in the general effort to march northward and take over China, that you could utilize this kind of organization for this larger political purpose.

22.4 Northern Expedition

22.4.1 *Rise of Chiang Kai-shek*

In this situation, as I said, it is someone like Chiang Kai-shek who's going to rise because he is a professional military man in an age when professional military men are important. And so Sun Yat-sen starts relying upon him for all military aspects. He's sent to Moscow in 1923 for training. In fact, in this period before the Northern Expedition reaches Shanghai, he is known often in the Western press as the "Red General." He doesn't seem to have any enormous commitment to one ideological position or the other, at least in this period. So Sun also appoints him as his professional military guy, commandant of the Huangpu (the Whampoa) Military Academy, which is going to train the officers of the army that's going to march northward and reunite China through military means.

Chiang himself was highly nationalistic but also had a notion of himself as a man of destiny who is going to save the country. This will be significant because he tended to have had, right from the beginning, a certain tension with the Russian advisors. He wants to make decisions that very often run counter to what the Russian advisors want. And this in the end will prove to be Chiang Kai-shek's undoing. Of course it's

a complicated way in which the situation develops to lead to his eventual demise. And it is indeed my own interpretation to see things that way. Now I'll tell you what I mean by this. Before the Northern Expedition can be launched, Sun Yat-sen dies. And the Nationalist Party, which even though was in form a Leninist-style party, was never quite the ironclad organization that the CPC was. So the Nationalist Party starts coming apart; that is, various factions emerge in conflict with one another. We won't go into the details of the Western Hill's faction and so on. But basically it is not a truly united party, certainly not united in ideology or in general aims and the cliques within it were quite potent. It's among these cliques that Chiang is maneuvering. He has no fixed loyalty to any particular clique. He's always maneuvering to put himself in the middle and by that position making himself the only leader that everybody can agree upon.

22.4.2 Decision for the Northern Expedition

So Chiang's urge was to launch the Northern Expedition sooner rather than later. It's for various reasons. No. 1, he's going to be the man of destiny to reunite China. No. 2, the tax base on which this ever larger army is resting, is being fed by and is relatively limited. And so going on in this direction, that ever increasing army and officialdom is going to eventually antagonize the locals considerably. That's another thing. Thirdly, he wanted to be independent of the Russians. So once he could get into China—leave Guangdong, enter China as a whole—he would be able to be more independent of the Russian advisors and Borodin.

Now the Russians are reasoning: first of all, he doesn't at this point have sufficient military strength to pull off this task; he is simply too weak, vis-à-vis the collective military forces of all the militarists. And so their advice was to wait on further development. Of course they didn't want him to be in China as a whole because then he would be independent, he would get out from under their control. The CPC, because they hadn't consolidated themselves within the KMT yet, were also in favor of delaying the Northern Expedition. Yet in the end, Chiang prevails and so in 1926 the Northern Expedition is launched.

However, precisely because he has inadequate military forces that are directly loyal to him, he starts compromising before he even gets out of Guangdong Province. There are five divisions involved, two of which are Guangxi Clique troops. Now the Guangxi Clique is all in favor of the Nationalist Northern Expedition. However, they never like Chiang Kai-shek. They were always to some degree in rivalry with him and in tension with him. Those military units that Chiang actually directly control, that were the most loyal to him personally, were not all that numerous. And he always had to rely upon compromise and politics in commanding whatever army. Those units that were most loyal to him were staffed by officers produced by the Huangpu (the Whampoa Military) Academy, of which he was commandant. And so that was his core at the very beginning.

At the end of the Northern Expedition, the way that he deals with the prominent northern militarists, such as Yan Xishan and Feng Yuxiang, is a good example. He has minimal conditions: Will you use our postal service? Will you fly our flag? Will you allow party offices to be opened and Sun Yat-sen picture to be hung and revered? Will you use our currency?—If those conditions are met, then all right, you are a member of the KMT. Whereas the actual situation was not all that simple. This made the KMT as an organization a far cry from the original Leninist-style model or ideal. It became more like an umbrella organization. Party recruitment, which of course increased as the Northern Expedition was successful, was a haphazard affair whereby the candidates for membership were not at all carefully examined. They were taken wholesale into the party. Unlike the CPC, which was very very careful, scrupulous about the choice or admission of candidates for membership, the Nationalist Party tended from the very beginning to be more a looser organization. And so it is this factor that in the end would be Chiang Kai-shek's undoing. Since the launching of the Northern Expedition, he had always been in a position of relative weakness. As we shall see, this pattern will continue right to the very end of his career, at least his career on the mainland of China.

22.4.3 *Advance North*

Chiang does succeed against many people's expectations in moving northward into the Yangtze Valley, takes Wuhan and eventually reaches the great goal of Shanghai in April of 1927. At this point, he has a secure source of revenue. He controls the lower Yangtze Valley. And so he decides he is strong enough to move against what he perceived of as his chief rival, and the one that he fears the most in many respects, that is, the CPC. The CPC during the Northern Expedition continues to work in mass organizations, that is, labor unions and peasant unions. This is one area that Chiang, a military man, cannot control. There is no way that he can compete in the organization of mass organizations with the CPC, which is more suited to it in several respects. So he launches a purge against the Communists within the KMT. The communist membership does take some losses in the immediate environs of Shanghai but it doesn't disappear. That is to say, there is still a CPC that exists. It is forced underground at this point naturally but of course he doesn't succeed in killing the entire party. He succeeds in killing a few members, especially in the environs of Shanghai.

Now the original Nationalist Party that launched the Northern Expedition had at this point already moved to Wuhan, where they were set up. And they themselves, the bulk of the Nationalist Party in Wuhan, were not at all sympathetic to Chiang or his means, the way that he was operating, not to mention the purge against the Communists. So they didn't go along with Chiang Kai-shek's purge at the beginning. However, in the long run, they had no choice. Why? The obvious and primary reason is that he had more military force. Back in Guangdong, there are a lot of other people who don't like Chiang Kai-shek, Hu Hanmin and other long-term Nationalist Party members who preceded Chiang in their membership. And so whatever happens, he's

not going to control most of the surface of China. In any case, at this point, the Wuhan regime does not have any choice but to accept Chiang Kai-shek, his purge of the Communists, because they have nowhere to turn.

The Russians have run. To a certain extent, this reflects badly on Stalin because his major concern during this period was his rivalry with Trotsky. He wanted to get rid of Trotsky. And so the ideological dispute with Trotsky did have to do with strategy in China. Trotsky for the most part was very suspicious of Chiang Kai-shek, and as far as that goes, Sun Yat-sen. He did not want to have the communist revolution, the socialist revolution, be simply the servants of the bourgeois democratic revolution. So he called for something continuing; that is one bourgeois democratic revolution would flow naturally into the next. Stalin was on the other side. And right until a few days before the purge was launched, people were expressing to Stalin anxiety about what Chiang Kai-shek might do. And he used this expression in Russian that is apparently very common that, “Don’t worry. He’s like a lemon. After I’ve squeezed his juice out, I will throw away the rind.” Of course, as we know, it’s Chiang Kai-shek who squeezed first; he squeezed Stalin’s lemon.

22.5 Break Between KMT and CPC

Let’s go back over the same period to see what the Communist Party of China was doing at this point.

22.5.1 *Birth of Rural Strategy*

The single most significant event was Mao Zedong’s “Report on the Peasant Movement in Hunan.” He had gone back to his home province of Hunan and seen that there was a very active peasant movement. Landlords were being dispossessed, and land redistribution was going on. So he comes back to Canton. He is the head of the Peasant Institute there and makes this report. It’s extremely significant because it is the first adumbration of what would later be called, at least by foreigners, “the Rural Strategy.” So at this point, he presents a new strategy for the CPC that declares we are the party of proletariat but we can harness this rural dissatisfaction for our own purposes. We can use this force to take power. We don’t have to rely solely on the proletariat because after all in China the proletariat was extremely small.

He instead tries to show that if we utilize the rural “propertyless class”—the word for proletarian is in Chinese *wuchan*, propertyless—if we use the rural propertyless class, the rural proletariat as it were, we’ll have more adherents of course, and we’ll have more people and therefore a greater political force with which to develop the party’s power and eventually to seize power. Now this was extremely unorthodox but it reflected Mao’s continuous practical bent, his continuous search for pragmatic solutions to things.

22.5.2 Purge of the CPC

So after this, when the purge is launched in the lower Yangtze Valley the units of the Northern Expedition that are sympathetic to the Communists then run for the hills. Stalin continues to not have any idea of what's going on on the ground, still focusing on his rivalry with Trotsky, orders the party to stage urban uprisings, that all this setback of Chiang Kai-shek's purge is merely "a trough between revolutionary waves." We can still rely upon this tried-and-true method of seizing cities. So this turns out to be another failure. Canton is indeed seized for three days. And then there is a slaughter during the three days, then another army unit comes in and there's another slaughter. So it can't be regarded as anything but a tragic mistake.

Mao Zedong himself was involved in what was called the Autumn Harvest Uprising that was supposed to take Changsha. And it too doesn't even get near Changsha. It's another failure because in the end there was no way to overcome the present military force that was occupying and defending these cities. It was a strategic error of no mean proportions. So after that, the remnants of Communist units or units with commanders sympathetic to the Communists went into the countryside.

22.5.3 Red Army

There is a famous meeting of two remnant forces, one under Mao Zedong and the other under Zhu De in an inaccessible area in southern Jiangxi. They go into the hills basically. This is the traditional place where rebels go. They go to inaccessible terrain precisely because they are inaccessible.

Now this is the beginning of, well, I guess you could say the Red Army, although it was officially noted as the Nanchang August 1st event, another uprising that didn't work out. But the most important base area that will be established will be the one in southern Jiangxi in a mountainous area. There were several smaller base areas created by other smaller remnants. This will be the major one and the one from which or through which the party would survive.

22.5.4 Establishment of Base Area

How did they support themselves? Essentially, they set up a government. They did this by moving into an area, removing whatever other political powers they found, dispossessing the wealthy and establishing their own patron-client relationship by using the wealth that they had taken from one group to another, the poor peasants, the landless peasants, so that they had established their own connection with the local populace in this way.

They were also using guerrilla tactics to defend themselves, but the bases upon which this base area was resting was still somewhat shaky for two reasons. And Chairman Mao was in opposition in this period rather than together with the highest leadership in that he criticized the form in which these base areas were run, which seemed to be more like the “roving bandit” model. Remember, when we were talking about the Taipings’ failure, that the first and most important factor in establishing a stable regime is to have a regularized relationship with the local populace, taxation system that’s open and everyone sees it rather than an expropriation system. Secondly, he was concerned about the middle peasants. That is, very often depending upon the area, the bulk of the peasantry, many peasants would think that, “I will not perhaps work this hard toward this goal because you see what happens to rich peasants.” And so this was not good for the economy in general. So these were two factors that Chairman Mao was taking into consideration in this critique.

And sure enough, eventually troops of Chiang Kai-shek more or less loyal to him did indeed wipe out the base area, which in turn led to the Long March, the epic journey which goes all around the place and ends up in northern Shanxi. And so a new primary base area for the party is created there.

22.6 Foundation of Nanjing Government

During the intervening period that we are talking about, from 1928 through to 1937, Chiang Kai-shek was again using this tactic as the one indispensable leader, the one leader that the majority could agree upon. He ends up as the primary leader of the new regime that’s founded in Nanjing, the Nanjing Government of the Republic of China. He threatens to retire. Of course, several people at this point use this tactic of withdrawing from politics and then of course because of their position they are called back into politics. So Chiang ends up being, more than any other leader certainly, the leader of the Nanjing Government. But he’s never, until much later, the president. His only title is chairman of the military commission. That’s his only official title. But again because this is the age of the gun, control of the military is the single most essential factor in politics, so with this title, as the Commissioner of Military Affairs, he is able to rule in Nanjing. This does not mean, however, that the Northern Expedition succeeded. That is, I just mentioned that the northern warlords threatened to march on Nanjing. They go to absolute war with the Nanjing Government. I said that Guangdong itself where the Northern Expedition was launched from was also not under the control of the Nanjing Government. It’s another faction of the Nationalist Party that is much in opposition to Chiang Kai-shek.

In 1933, the Province of Fujian declares independence and it doesn’t come quite to large military conflict. But again this is indicative of how insecure, how unstable, this new government was. It was immediately recognized as the government of China by most of the world and so it did have immediate international recognition and diplomatic relations with the rest of the world. But it could not be called an actual government of China because it controlled so little and that was quite unstable

control. The heart of this regime was the Yangtze Valley. Anything else beyond that became very iffy. In Fujian, for instance, you have revolt. North China was of course completely out of Nanjing's control.

It doesn't mean, however, that the regime was not making progress toward, I guess, a greater unity of the nation. For instance, it did, through this battle with the northern militarists, kind of "tame" them. They would never again threaten outright the Nanjing regime. Feng Yuxiang never regained the same power that he had prior to the war. Yan Xishan was more or less tamed. But he wasn't going to abide by orders coming from Nanjing any more than Han Fuqu in Shandong was going to abide by them. West China of course is all a foreign territory as far as the Nanjing regime is concerned. So to a certain extent, there is a kind of misunderstanding involved here that later when the KMT, when Chiang Kai-shek gets to Taiwan. In that situation, they want to be known as a previous government of all of China. In order to legitimize their control over Taiwan! Even though that was a myth, they had to put that image forward.

Chapter 23

The Nanjing Decade



We are going to discuss what is sometimes called the “Nanjing Decade”, that is, the period of 1928 to 1937. It actually isn’t quite a decade but in Western historiography it’s usually referred to with this name, and we cannot discuss the Nanjing regime without discussing Chiang Kai-shek once more.

23.1 Chiang Kai-shek’s Attitude Toward Japan

What I’ve had to say about him so far is that he was a man who was suited to his age and his environment in that he was a military man and was quite cautious in certain respects in putting his trust in any other kind of a person. He was adept in the political arena that he was playing in because the “common coin of the realm” politically was still command over bodies of armed men. His general weakness in the military realm as well was that he wasn’t tolerant of differing opinions; that is, those differing from his own. And he surrounded himself consequently, even without consciously doing it, with “worshippers,” with people who would agree with him, “yes men,” and thus he often succeeded in isolating himself from the realities of the situation that had to be dealt with.

As I had mentioned before, his own ideal was probably that of Japan, the state and society of Japan in that it was a society almost military in its vertical structures of authority, almost military command structures. And being a military man, he admired greatly the code of Bushidō. As I had also previously mentioned, he perceived the Chinese Communists to be a more profound threat than other threats that he had managed to contain, such as the Northern militarists. After the Great Plain’s War of 1930, they would no longer be a direct threat to the survival of the Nanjing regime.

23.1.1 First Clear Out the Enemies Within, Then Resist Foreign Aggression

To deal with the Chinese Communists, he used, if at all possible, his own trusted military commanders, graduates of the Whampoa Academy. They were not necessarily the best, however. This is often true throughout his career. He placed loyalty above ability very often and as a consequence, sometimes these commanders did not do so well. It is in connection with the suppression of the Chinese Communist base areas that he hires German military advisors. This is 1932–1934. And it is with good reason that he does so. I think that the German military model, which in turn was reflected in the military model used by Japan, greatly appealed to him. So with the advice of these German advisors, he initiated a series of “Encirclement Campaigns,” involving blockhouses built in an ever-smaller circle so that the usual guerilla tactic of simply picking up and moving to another place would not be so effective. There was a gradual encirclement of a smaller and smaller area, thus isolating the core of the base area and so forcing it to move.

23.1.2 Japan’s Furthered Aggression

In the meantime Japan continued its abiding policy of expansion on the Asian mainland, namely in China. Japan already had in the Northeast a relatively large military. So what they do in various incidences that took place? Very often local military commanders would make a decision and cause an incident, and the government back in Tokyo could not but support them since it was already made. Whatever the cabinet back in Tokyo might not have approved of was already done. So it is in this way very often that the aggression was furthered. The Japanese are interested in control of raw materials especially.

They are already established in the Northeast. They assassinate the ruling militarist of the area, Zhang Zuolin, very early (1927). The Japanese, in any case, invade the Northeast in 1931, that is, an outright invasion of the area and occupation. A short time later, they will establish a puppet regime in the Northeast. And this, of course, is mere window dressing. They dig up the last heir to the Qing throne, Puyi, and put him at the top of this puppet state although he himself, and most of his advisors or high officials don’t have that much influence in any important decisions or even in the day-to-day affairs.

23.1.3 Chiang's Response to Japanese Aggression

Chiang Kai-shek, perhaps as a realistic person, saw that if he in this very limited state that he had created along the Yangtze River, went to war with Japan, he would most certainly lose, and the Nanjing government itself would be in danger. So he did not respond. Chinese public opinion, however, as usual from the time of May Fourth Incident, responded differently. From that incident through the 1930s to the outbreak of war with Japan, there would be similar demonstrations, protests, usually from urban students, against the policy of appeasement with Japan. Of course Chiang was temporizing, and he knew it very well. It wasn't so much that he had studied there but he saw that the Japanese military machine simply would overwhelm the Chinese military machine as it was at the time. So he temporized. This would be one of those important factors in the Nanjing regime. It was protested against by primarily urban students throughout its existence.

23.1.4 Chiang's Strategy

So Chiang's overall strategy in nation-building was to consolidate first and slowly expand until the state had reached the point that it could resist foreign aggression, Japanese aggression specifically. Foreign policy of the Nanjing regime is also interesting. At the outset of the Northern Expedition, the rhetoric was very clearly anti-imperialist. And to a certain extent, that rhetoric doesn't depart. It is the reality that changes once the Nanjing regime is established primarily because it is very clear that Britain or France or the United States were not the threat to the Nanjing regime or to China. It was the Japanese. And so the foreign policy of the Nanjing regime tends to reflect this. They are more open to cooperation, are less rhetorically hostile to the West, the distant threats, in hopes that this will enable them to build up a resistance to Japanese expansion internationally. To a certain extent, this works but in the end the League of Nations, the international organization that was supposed to be taking care of such things, was ineffective.

23.2 Weaknesses of the Nanjing Regime

So the Nanjing regime could not be considered a total success but it couldn't be considered a total failure either.

23.2.1 Regional Nature of Nanjing Regime

If we concentrate upon its weaknesses, what would we say? Well, the obvious and first weakness is that it had a regional nature. It was concentrated along the Yangtze Valley and with the late addition of Guangdong, Guangxi, involving the Guangxi Clique of Bai Chongxi and Li Zongren, was not quite so securely attached in that they were in continuous rivalry with, in tension with, Chiang Kai-shek personally.

23.2.2 Loose Disparate Membership and the KMT's Non-Revolutionary Nature

Secondly, another factor that I have already mentioned that could be considered a weakness, the disparate nature of the Nationalistic Party membership. That is, the requirements for admission were not rigorous. Admission procedures tended to be lax. Undesirable types were therefore not excluded. And especially during the rapid expansion of revolutionary territory during the Northern Expedition, there was a flood of new recruits for the Nationalist Party.

In 1926, membership was 150,000 roughly. In 1929, after the establishment of the Nanjing Government, it rose to 630,000, a great increase to say the least. There was virtually no screening of applicants. Many members of the old northern bureaucracies just came South and joined, together with various other careerists and opportunists. This absorption was justified at the time in that compromise would shorten and avoid military conflict, which indeed was true. Again, it goes back to my point that when the Northern Expedition started, it was in the position of relative weakness. And Chiang Kai-shek, its commander, remained that way for the rest of his career.

23.2.2.1 Effect of the Purge of CPC from the KMT

Another factor that could be considered a weakness is that because of the purge of the Communists and because of the Communist involvement in mass organizations, it would be very difficult for the Nanjing regime to establish mass organizations. Those idealistic young people who would be required for organizations of this sort were afraid to engage in this kind of work because it smacked of communist activity. And so there were no really effective mass organizations that the Nanjing regime was able to organize. Chiang's party disassociated itself from mass movements just when they could be useful, a time of surging nationalism and communications so that the masses of people could start being considered a true source of political power. So up until this time, I don't think that they were, that even the mass organizations that took part indirectly in the Northern Expedition were not all that effective in the military sense; that is, the core of things was still military activity, military action.

23.2.2.2 Ineffective Administration

Another weakness was the top-heavy nature of the Nanjing regime. There were notions that if you write a report on something that would count as something actually being done about the problem. But of course it didn't work that way. The Censorate of the government that was supposed to ensure efficiency and incorruptibility and so on was a farce. It just didn't work. The work style in general of the Nanjing regime was quite bureaucratic.

23.2.2.3 Corruption

Another weakness would be very often mentioned—corruption; so that there's no question the old culture of *shengguanfacai* (become an official and strike it rich) had not died. It was still around in a very vigorous way and had a lot to do with the way that people viewed political office. It was primarily viewed as a kind of business deal. To a certain extent, this attitude was prevalent throughout the government structures.

23.2.3 Rural Sector

Another weakness was Nanjing's inability to do anything about the rural sector. That is, a part of the regional program of the Northern Expedition was land reform. It is not a problem of Nanjing or of the Nationalist Party itself not wanting to carry out a land reform program. It is their fundamental inability to control the rural areas in order to do so. To a certain extent, Nanjing didn't have a monopoly on armed force. There were throughout the territories that were supposed to be controlled by Nanjing militia commanders, some of whom manufactured their own weapons, and other types of that kind of organization, Red Spears or whatever. So Nanjing was only able to talk about land reform. When it did attempt it, as when the party did attempt it in Zhejiang, it was easily stymied by local elites.

It is not as sometimes people see it as an alliance between local elites and the Nanjing regime. They were continuously in conflict. The newly formed central state wanted to, as much as the late Qing had wanted to, reestablish a political center at the expense of the local elites. The Nationalist government, the Nationalist Party tried throughout the 1930s and even during the war to somehow supplant, or rather remove, the influence of the local elites in one way or another. One of the devices that was often used was to recruit local elites of whatever sort into the party and then send them to a training program for cadre whereby they would learn that they should take orders according to the vertical commands structure that is headed by the Nanjing government. And this generally did not work. I know of several case studies that I've done myself in Henan that the method was tried, and the local elites simply did not change their nature just because they had gone to cadre school. In Zhejiang, as I said, the one time that it looked as though land reform was possible it

was just stopped in its tracks. There was a conflict between the party organization in Zhejiang and the local elites. And it was the local elites, in any case, rather than the activist Party that won.

23.2.4 Mass Organizations and Political Participation

Another weakness is the inability of the government to establish an effective democracy. Now this was, at least on paper, a dictatorship, this one-party dictatorship of the Nationalist Party was justified because Sun Yat-sen had already decided that you could not institute a real democracy except after the ground had been prepared through education and then slowly at the *xian* (县), at the county level, it could begin. So tutelage, the term used to justify the monopoly on power by the Nationalists, was the justification that they used for their position.

23.2.5 Factionalism

Another factor that has to be considered weakness is factionalism. To a certain extent, we've already talked about this because I said that in the end, certainly by the time of establishment of the Nanjing regime, the Nationalist Party was an umbrella organization, covering many disparate elements under one umbrella of at least in name the Nationalist Party. Within that umbrella organization, factional or clique warfare was continuous. Very often because the "Three People's Principles" was really so vague, you could justify almost anything if you went to the right place in the "Three People's Principles."

A concrete example would be that Wang Jingwei's faction was excluded from power at the beginning of the Nanjing regime and they were really against, as you would expect, the lack of democracy, political participation and so on, and argued against tutelage. But once the Wang Jingwei faction was given posts in the Nationalist government in Nanjing, then they essentially change their tune, "No, no, no, no, you cannot establish any kind of democratic system allow any other political parties to share power because this would forget the lessons that we learnt in 1913 when the Second Revolution failed, that we have to hold together as Sun Yat-sen told us to do, there has to be a period of tutelage so that eventually there could be a democratic system. But to do it now would forget the lessons of history that we've already learnt." So their rhetoric was completely changed after they themselves were able to participate more fully in the one-party dictatorship.

23.2.6 Political Repression

Finally there's the issue of political repression. To a certain extent, because of the limited nature of this regime, they didn't have the ability to repress all that much. But those areas that they did control, large cities in the Yangtze Valley and to a certain extent elsewhere, they did control enough to try censorship, to try various other ways to repress dissident elements. And sometimes, the dissident elements could protect themselves by being in the concessionary areas, the treaty port area of the cities. But sometimes they were arrested; sometimes censorship involved arrest of newspaper editors and such, or other types of similar measures. Now this was nothing. They didn't have the ability to control the situation completely, but they have the ability to irritate the intellectual classes of the large urban centers anyway. That is, they just repressed them enough to turn the intellectual classes against them, against the party, but not repressed them enough to actually stamp out all dissent.

23.3 Achievements of the Nanjing Regime

So did the Nanjing regime have any achievements to boast of at all? Yes, I think so. In certain areas, there was effective modernization.

23.3.1 Fiscal, Legal, Educational Modernization

Fiscal, for instance. The banking system was greatly improved and modernized; legally, there's a new code of laws, a modernized code of laws that were rewritten. In the area of education, there was also some progress, establishment of many modern style educational institutions. Currency, as part of the fiscal measures, by 1937 for the first time I think in Chinese history, was unified. This was no mean feat.

23.3.2 Urban Modernization

Secondly, during the Nanjing era, Chinese larger cities did see modernizations; that is, in places like Shanghai or Nanjing, the capital, you'd see the same types of things that you saw every place else in the big cities of the world, water supply systems, sanitation, radios, movies, automobiles and cable car rails. In the case of Nanjing especially, there were statues, bridges and monumental government structures. As a matter of fact, it is in Nanjing that one sees the beginning of a kind of Sino-Western style of architecture. The structures are essentially Western with Chinese touches added to them. Some buildings that still exist on the (what was then) the Yanjing

University campus, now Beijing University campus, were like that. There were many such buildings in Nanjing itself of course, but they were destroyed by the Japanese during the Rape of Nanjing.

So there was considerable urban modernization, considerable modernization in the fiscal, educational and legal structures. That would be about it. The Nanjing regime did, however, provide a minimum kind of political stability. That is, there was no longer the scale of civil war that had been the case previously. There was still civil war, but it wasn't in the same scale.

23.4 Class Base of KMT

Now the question usually asked about the Nanjing regime is: What class nature did it have? What classes did it depend upon for its existence? That's really hard to say. You know, you talk about, for instance, the urban commercialized classes. The urban commercialized classes were directly victimized by the Nationalist Party and the government many times. I mean even such measures as kidnapping would be used to extort money from these classes. H. H. Kung ran the fiscal end of the Nanjing government. He took many measures that would be directly against the interests of the Chinese banks. So you can't see too much of alliance with the bourgeoisie, the big bourgeoisie of those areas in those urban enclaves that the Nationalist Party controlled.

Well, the other class that is often mentioned as being the class base is the landlord class. I can't see that either. Because one thing is very clear. The Nanjing regime was in constant competition with local elites. Some of the local elites, in fact, most of them, were not old gentry families. But they usually had some land. They were landholders of some sort. They have perhaps recently risen to that status. So the major tension was between the Nanjing regime's attempt to impose a new style of government and new large bureaucracy that would go downward into the village level.

And resistance was everywhere really, less so perhaps in the core of provinces of the Yangtze Valley, and was very furious, and to a certain extent, it may be never have been overcome until possibly after the war. By then the returning Nationalist bureaucrats going back to East China acted as carpetbaggers and so antagonized the urban classes, that, together with inflation, more or less alienated the population of the large urban enclaves.

So that would be a rough summary of the nine years of the Nanjing regime, and we will now proceed to go further and explore the relationship between Chiang Kai-shek and the Nanjing regime's foreign policy.

Chapter 24

The War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression



The Japanese invasion of China was the major turning point in Chinese history in the twentieth century.

24.1 The Xi'an Incident

Prior to the invasion, another important incident takes place, the Xi'an Incident. Xi'an is a city in Shaanxi province. And the Chinese Communists are up in the north. Chiang Kai-shek had taken the previous militarist controlling the Northeast under his wing. Zhang Xueliang had been driven from his homeland he and his army were exiles from their homeland. Chiang more or less adopts him as a protégé and of course that makes perfect sense politically. But through the early 1930s, the pressure from the public, especially from younger intellectuals, for resistance to Japan affected everyone and it affected Zhang Xueliang as well.

So were other people involved in the Xi'an Incident itself, included Yang Hucheng, a leader of what was called the Northwest Army. And he himself and his army were typical of the period. They were kind of ragtag, assembled militia or whatever. But they indeed were the original military force in this area. So Chiang sends his prodigy, Zhang Xueliang, his erstwhile prodigy as were turned out, to Xi'an and tells him to attack the Communists in the northern Shaanxi Province. He doesn't do so readily. There's some military conflict but not really. Now this is because of course of the factor that I just mentioned. In public opinion, there was this demand for resistance to Japan and therefore the army engaged in a war with other Chinese, a civil war, would not be so enthusiastic about the project. They were so far driven from their homeland which is occupied by the Japanese and fighting other Chinese in northern Shaanxi province. That doesn't make any sense. We should be fighting the Japanese back in Manchuria. Of course realistically, it wasn't possible. But because of this situation Zhang Xueliang decides to kidnap Chiang Kai-shek and visit Yan'an in December of 1936.

It's about the same time that the mess occurs. The unfolding of events was fast. Chiang Kai-shek arrives. He does the usual things. He tours the ancient sights and the modern sights of Xi'an. He and his entourage are put up in Huaqingchi, a hot springs spa to the East of the city of Xi'an. Now it was a relatively large structure, a lot of rooms, and so when Zhang Xueliang decides to move, he simply moves his troops out to that spa, surrounds it and looks to capture Chiang Kai-shek. Chiang, having heard the commotion, awakens early in the morning, very early in the morning. It was during the night practically. Chiang hears the commotion and flees out of the relatively low window. I remember visiting the rooms. You could get out the windows relatively easily. But he doesn't even take the time troops have arrived to dress so he's in December weather going out in his nightshirt, and even without his false teeth, which he should have put in as well. So he is in a very very bad physical state. He is finally found, of course, many hours later frozen, as you would imagine, hiding between some rocks on this little hillside against which the spa lay.

He's brought back and Zhang Xueliang contacts the Communists in Yan'an, "And so well we're going to now decide what to do with Chiang Kai-shek." He of course tries to persuade Chiang Kai-shek to simply change the policy of appeasement to Japan to one of vigorous resistance and Chiang Kai-shek refuses to listen. For the next several weeks, a very interesting drama occurs. The Chinese Communists represented by Zhou Enlai, who comes south from the north to Xi'an, says eventually that, "No, we should not kill Chiang Kai-shek because this would make even the Nanjing government come apart, make that very tenuous unity of some provinces dissolve and we would have greater chaos than before. We would have less unity against the Japanese pressure." So Zhou Enlai advocates making a deal.

Back in Nanjing, of course rivals for the premier political position start moving immediately. That was the nature of politics in those days. And for a while, there was considerable bombing in area where Chiang was. Of course, it might have killed Chiang Kai-shek. But in any case the point was through these weeks it gradually dawned on all parties that you couldn't kill him. By killing him, you'd have a worse situation than you had now vis-à-vis Japan. So after a few weeks of persuasion, Chiang Kai-shek does indeed promise to vigorously resist Japan from then on and to stop this war with the Communists in northern Shaanxi. He doesn't mention that part publicly when he goes back to Nanjing, of course, but that was the agreement.

And surprisingly, he does hold to that agreement. So the next time an incident happens, in this case outside of Beijing at the Marco Polo Bridge, the central government in Nanjing doesn't take immediate action. But as that incident is being sorted out, as the Japanese, sending in more troops, and having direct military conflict with the local militarists controlling Hebei Province, as that is going on, Chiang goes into retreat, his usual mountain retreat at Lushan, and emerges from that retreat sending down the word that this is war to the end. So the die is cast. The Nationalist government has opted for war with Japan.

24.2 Expansion of Japanese Control 1936–1939

And not surprisingly again, the Japanese immediately start expanding their control over their area of North China. They make a landing in northern Shandong. And the major action, as again would be expected, is in Shanghai, in preparation to going up river and destroying Nanjing. Throughout this early period of the war, the Japanese are still hoping that there would be some compromise to resolve the issue. Of course there isn't.

24.2.1 *Barbaric Acts by the Japanese in Nanjing and Other Places*

And so these military actions by Japan prove that indeed their military machine cannot easily be stopped by Chinese forces and so they do reach Nanjing and do horrific things, that is to say, unspeakable things. It's just incredible how barbarous and at what scale this great slaughter took place. After mass raping a woman, they would slit her up from crotch to neck. They throw babies in the air and catch them on bayonets. They have a beheading contest between two officers using their swords to see how many heads could be cut off. Just really incredible stuff.

Now this event, the Rape of Nanjing, as it is sometimes called, is relatively well documented because after all it's taking place in an urban center. There are foreigners in the area. The Japanese themselves document much of this by taking pictures of it, I don't know why. And some pictures appear in Japanese newspapers back home in Tokyo of some of these events. I remember one, I think was in Tokyo *Nichinichi Shinbun* that showed the two officers who are in a competition for head cutting off, a "beheading speed competition." Truly horrific. What isn't usually recognized is that outside of Nanjing in the countryside, the Japanese punitive expeditions that were sent out under the "Three All Policy"—is the "kill all, burn all, pillage all," perhaps, were even worse. And they didn't simply mean terrible things. Even when they didn't catch people to kill—I'm thinking again of a lot of interviewing that I did of a rural residence in areas of Henan and of Shandong. Very often the Japanese, upon getting to a village, although the inhabitants had escaped, would then ruin the water supply, defecate in food stores and, you know, burn down things in general for no good reason except that they were supposed to terrorize the Chinese rural dwellers. Actually it didn't have that effect. It did have the effect of stiffening their will.

Certainly, there's another side. I remember one old man was telling me—this was back in the early 80s—about an incident that took place in his village in Henan. He was ten at the time and just so happened that he was outside the village perimeter when the Japanese converged on it. He was able to drop into the weeds and remain there undetected. The other inhabitants in the village were then put into one house, one structure, the doors were bolted and then the fire was set to the entire thing. They did

remove one family because I think they were going to gang rape the daughter and the Japanese, being “gentlemen,” would decide they would spare that one family. The old man who was telling me this, talked of the sounds of popping thoracic cavities and skulls because once the insides get heated, they basically explode. This was happening needlessly. There was no reason for this kind of barbarity. And yet it occurred. It occurred for the most part undetected by the world because, like banditry and many other depredations, it took place in the countryside where there were no foreigners or reporters, or photographers or people who dared to record it in any fashion. So the world itself was mostly ignorant of many of these barbaric acts by the Japanese. The only one that of course became well known was the Rape of Nanjing, the capital of the Nationalist government.

They move on to Wuhan and so on so that the Yangtze Valley they more or less cover. They make landings in various areas and for the most part cover at least the communication roads of North China, the coasts of South China and the Yangtze Valley.

24.2.2 KMT's Withdraw Westward

The Nanjing government, for its part, has no choice but to trade space for time and therefore decides to move inland to the basin province of Sichuan and the city of Chongqing. It is from here that the rest of the war the Nationalist government would attempt to govern. But for the most part, this was a joke. In the first place, Sichuan itself was never under Nationalist Party influence, was never under Nanjing government influence. It was still controlled by local militarists. There were six of them when, you know, the war broke out itself. And Chiang Kai-shek had to rely upon the local elites that just feed the capital in Chongqing. He had to rely upon societies like the Elder Brother Society, in order to get grain from countryside to feed the capital.

He was not in a very good position; that is, the government as a whole was not in a very good position. There was a mass exodus to West China. Industrial plants, schools and other such institutions were packed up and carried physically to Sichuan. This was a remarkable event, one that certainly was not easily achieved without enormous sacrifice. But rather than let the Japanese occupiers use these things, the people and institutions just took off westward. But in the end, there's no question Chiang Kai-shek's military forces were simply no match for the Japanese forces.

Another factor that put Chiang and the Nanjing regime into an awkward position was that Chiang was really sincere about trying to stop the Japanese advance up the Yangtze to Nanjing. And so he used his best divisions to try to effect this. Of course, it failed and these divisions were chewed up considerably so that they were no longer the military force they once were.

24.2.3 Chiang Kai-shek Becomes a National Symbol

Vis-à-vis the other militarists, such as the Guangxi Clique who also of course sacrificed considerably in the early war, Chiang was not as powerful as he was before because some of his core units had gotten messed up by this attempt to keep the Japanese from moving down the Yangtze Valley. Ironically, it is precisely at this time that Chiang Kai-shek becomes a national symbol, a completely accepted leader by all parties. He becomes a symbol of resistance not only within China but internationally as well. So his image, which was never that good, certainly in the West, his image was already by the 1930s quite negative and with certain Western reporters, you know *Red Star over China's* and so on, it actually gets worse over this time. Once he establishes himself as the great resistor to Japan, then his image is better than that had ever been before. Those areas that I said that were quasi or completely independent, that is, under local elites, were now forced to accept his armies.

24.2.4 Withdrawal of Provincial Governments

Now what's going on as well is there is a general exodus of administrators from all of these governments, provincial governments. Han Fuqu, for instance, takes all of the army and the administrators and some militia as well when he leaves. There is a vacuum created in those areas between the lines of communication, between the railroads and rivers, areas that Japanese simply cannot control. They have no way of doing it. So there are spaces between that still have a power vacuum and this will be the crucial factor in the expansion of the Chinese Communist Party.

24.3 Stalemate 1940–1944

By the end of 1939, there's a final attempt in the form of an offence in the winter of 1939 and 1940 on the part of the Nationalists and the Communists, staging an offence against the Japanese. And it didn't work. That is to say, although of course there were some military successes, there was no possibility of rolling back the Japanese occupation. And so a stalemate from beginning of 1940 to 1944 really was the overall situation. In fact, the Japanese at this point realized that they had got themselves into a fix, into a quagmire and how they were going to get out was still a great problem.

24.3.1 A Joke of Telling Significance

In Chongqing during the war, some American diplomat was discussing the military situation with an official of the KMT. The American, who of course was on the Chinese side in this affair, was expressing anxiety about the losses that the Chinese military forces were taking. Then he says something like the battle of such and such, the Japanese lost 2,000 but you lost 4,000; at the battle of such and such or this military campaign of such and such, the Japanese lost 5,000 but you lost 10,000. So if this trend continues into the future, what's going to be the final result? Very pessimistic about this. The Chinese official responded, well, pretty soon they will be no more Japanese. That is indeed true because Japan was simply too small a country to effectively occupy all of China. And that was it. It's only when the Pacific War starts (that is, after Pearl Harbor) that something else starts to happen.

24.3.2 Wang Jingwei's Puppet Regime

But at the same time, they had been establishing puppet regimes wherever they went. They were not as wholly accepted by the population but they were put into place. The people who served in these Japanese governments are usually called traitors, *hanjian*. Eventually, the Japanese connect with an old rival of Chiang Kai-shek's who is still frustrated about being shut out of central power, since he was an older party member than Chiang was and was close to Sun Yat-sen and so on. And that is Wang Jingwei. Wang Jingwei agrees to be the president of a new Chinese republic, which is of course a puppet state of the Japanese. They were thinking along the same lines as what they had done in Manchuria. This new Nanjing government was not very successful. And as I said, there was no way that the Japanese military forces themselves could actually control all of China. They had other fish to fry, as it were. So by 1940 there is stalemate.

24.3.3 Rapid Development of CPC

The expansion of base areas by the Communist Party of China was done under the Eighth Route Army, which was actually the unit that was most involved throughout North China. In part of North-central China, there was a new Chinese Communist Army organized, the New Fourth Army. It was just as spectacularly successful as the Eighth Route Army. That is, the popular perception was that these governments were fighting a more positive war; they were efficient and so were welcomed by the local populace. In 1937 at the beginning of this entire process, when the Chinese Communists were still in Northern Shaanxi, they had perhaps 50,000 men under arms. At the end of the war in 1945, they have 500,000 men under arms, plus a two

million-person militia. So the armed forces themselves just exploded because of the expansion of the base areas in North China and North-central China. While they were in Northern Shaanxi, they might have controlled perhaps two million people, I would say at most, because this was not a heavily populated area. By the end of the war, with these base areas, they controlled more like 90 million people. That expansion of population of this “state within the state” is just utterly amazing and remarkable. The number of Party members at the end of the Long March might be 40,000 or 50,000. By the end of the war, it was certainly a million at least, maybe more than that. There is an expansion of everything. The Party had been remade into what was essentially a new entity that was now back in the political game.

24.3.4 Ongoing Civil War

Chiang Kai-shek for his part was very suspicious naturally. He tried to blockade the Yan'an area. Upon being reported that there was conflict between Chinese Communist forces and other local forces, he was very concerned about that too. What happens in much of North China's was that there is still a civil war going on, usually between forces that have been given some kind of piece of paper, designating them as whatever—the 15th Regiment of the Fourth Division or some military unit that's organized according to the Nanjing government, military establishment. And there were still locals that have that much of a connection, especially in North China. They have no connection with the Nanjing government or the Chongqing government, but they did have such a military unit designation. They had a piece of paper certifying that they were central government forces, and therefore were able to collect taxes, ask for material support from local society. It was between these groups and the Eighth Route Army, the New Fourth Army that there were continued conflict. In the case of the New Fourth Army, there were actual conflicts between real central government forces. So there was a civil war going on.

24.3.5 Liang Shuming and Democratic League

Almost from the beginning, Liang Shuming, who I had mentioned before (the rural reconstructor) with everybody else, left Shandong with a small force of militia and some of the Rural Reconstruction Institute is cadre. He said he chased Han Fuqu all around the place, trying to persuade him to resist the Japanese. Because Han did not, he retreated in the face of the Japanese. And for that, he was executed. Chiang Kai-shek had finally a good reason to do away with him, this independent militarist. Well, in any case, Liang was still concerned about what was going on in Shandong. So very early in 1938, he takes a trip behind the lines in East China and goes back to Shandong, traveling through, essentially behind the Japanese lines as it were and

sees that these conflicts are going on continually. It was a shock to him to know that behind the lines, there was a civil war raging.

So he returns to East China and organizes the non-Communist, non-Nationalist parties into a separate, what has to be called a political organization. It has various names, ends up being called the Democratic League. The function of this group was supposed to try to keep the two sides from descending into outright civil war. That's what its function is after the war as well. But of course, as we know, they were unable to perform this task. They did, however, often perform as mediators between the two major parties.

24.4 End of the War

24.4.1 *America's Role*

At this juncture when Pearl Harbor happens. Chiang Kai-shek is much relieved. He knows that the Japanese overreached themselves. They might indeed have extended themselves into Southeast Asia, into areas of Burma, Thailand and so on but he knows that eventually they are going to be defeated, which of course they are, by the Americans because the United States was a considerable military power. Once it turns its industrial might to military purposes that constitutes a force that would overwhelm Japan. So the Pacific War starts. Chiang Kai-shek starts thinking ahead. Naturally at this point, he's an ally of the United States.

The United States is most interested in keeping him in the war, keeping him from going over to the Japanese. So they are aiding him over the hump, as it was called, over the Himalayas. The war material and supplies as well as the American military advisors and so on would fly over the Himalayas into Southwest China, where they established airfields for instance. One effective unit in the Chinese Air Force was staffed completely by Americans. This was before the Pacific War started. It's the Flying Tigers, which had considerable action in free China at the time.

So Chiang, upon receiving this aid over the hump, was interested in conserving as much of it as possible because he himself, again dealing from a position of weakness, was interested in storing up the sinews of war so as to make his position stronger after the war, which he knew would not occur without an enormous amount of effort on the Chongqing government's part.

His chief of staff, an American at least for a time, his chief of staff, Joseph Stillwell, was of course of the precisely opposite opinion—that Chongqing should fight a positive war with the Japanese, should open up the Burma road, the Ledo road so that China would not be completely isolated from the outside world. Flying war material over the hump was very expensive way of bringing aid to West China. So there was a conflict between Stillwell and Chiang, Stillwell wanting to use more of these resources to fight the Japanese in Southeast Asia, and Chiang Kai-shek wanting to conserve whatever military resources he had accumulated.

Who loses? It's the American. It's Joseph Stillwell who loses. He's recalled to the United States by President Roosevelt. Why? Because the chief American interest was keeping Chiang Kai-shek in the war with Japan; that is, above everything else the United States wanted a China that was going to continue the war, tie down Japanese troops in China, which were still in considerable number. And so Chiang had this strong hand, an ace in a hole as it were, because he could always hint that he was unable to continue, that the Chongqing government would have to make some compromise with the Japanese, which would of course be quite effective as leverage against the American government.

24.4.2 Japan's Surrender

When the atomic bomb is first dropped on Japan, which essentially is going to end the war, that is the event and then of course is the second, use of a second atomic weapon more or less ensures it. That's going to force Japan to surrender. When this event occurs, it surprises everyone. It surprises the Chinese of various kinds, Chinese Communists, Chinese Nationalists and everybody else. It surprises the Russians. Once that happens, the Russians are finally able, or finally want to, start a second front by invading Manchuria. So the war ends with the Russians occupying Manchuria, which by the way at least according to interviews that I've had, they acted dreadfully. It's the usual pillaging and raping, that kind of thing. Here they occupy this area of China. The war ends so suddenly that everyone is caught off guard. Chiang Kai-shek and the Nationalist government in West China of course is more removed from North China, Northeast China. Then the Chinese Communists already established a government in much of North China. So it is at that point that there is a kind of postwar alliance, help given to the Nationalist government by the American government.

24.4.3 America's Ideal of a Stable China

At this point, the war is over. The Americans no longer have an interest in trying to keep Chiang Kai-shek in it. What they are after, however, is a stable China, a stable postwar China, hopefully, united and powerful and democratic but at least a stable one. And they saw in Chiang Kai-shek the possibility that this might be the case. Prior to the end of the war, Presidents Roosevelt and Truman sent personal emissaries to try to ameliorate this conflict between the Nationalists and Communists. They failed. But it was still in the American interests to make the two sides come to an agreement rather than result to full-scale civil war because full-scale civil war would not result in a stable, united and strong China, which in the American strategy, in the President Roosevelt strategy, was needed to counteract the Soviet Union.

So the war ends, setting the stage for yet another conflict and that one we shall talk about later.